

DON'T FORGET YOUR "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

PRICE 5/-
EVERYWHERE

Star School Stories

"TRIMBLE THE TWISTER!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"THE FAMOUS FOUR'S
CHRISTMAS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

and

MANY FINE FEATURES
OF FUN AND FACT!

IN THIS ISSUE.

The GEM

2^d



**BAGGY GETS
A GOAL!**



HOW'S YOUR LUCK THIS WEEK?

Read what the stars foretell,
by PROFESSOR ZARRO.

HERE is this week's horoscope for every reader. Look for the division in which your birthday falls, and you will read what the stars prophesy for you.

AQUARIUS (the Water-Carrier), Jan. 21st to Feb. 19th.—You are due to make a new friend, but there is a chance you will also quarrel with an old one. A wish you are very keen about will be fulfilled—maybe it's that Christmas present you are hoping to get! An unexpected letter will arrive.

PISCES (the Fishes), Feb. 20th to March 21st.—Many born under the sign of Pisces are inclined to be lazy. For them, a quiet week lies ahead, unless they go "all out" for the things they want. Many visits, most of them enjoyable ones. A money problem solved.

ARIES (the Ram), March 22nd to April 20th.—Several unexpected "ups-and-downs." A week when you will want all your wits about you to solve the problems that will arise. Excellent tendencies for sport. If you have a secret, guard it carefully.

TAURUS (the Bull), April 21st to May 21st.—An important change in your life may occur this week. You will be disappointed over a plan you have been making, but fresh developments will start you off on a new one. If you have a worry, you will probably find it will solve itself in the next few days.

GEMINI (the Twins), May 22nd to June 21st.—Those born in this division are ideal types for parties and musical gatherings. Fond of fun, talking, and any kind of sport, their presence will help to make a Christmas party go with a swing. You will probably have the bad luck to lose something you treasure. You will be told a secret that will surprise you.

CANCER (the Crab), June 22nd to July 23rd.—Try not to worry if you hear something unpleasant. A chance of doing yourself, and others, a good turn is coming—be ready for it. Do you know someone abroad? He or she is going to get in touch with you. A meeting with someone of the opposite sex is at

hand. That'll cheer old Gussy up, if it's his birthday in this period!

LEO (the Lion), July 24th to Aug. 23rd.—Because you have the knack of making yourselves comfortable and cheerful anywhere, you will enjoy this Yuletide to its full. Think carefully; over any decisions you make; you are liable to make a wrong one. A piece of wonderfully good luck is coming your way.

VIRGO (the Virgin), Aug. 24th to Sept. 23rd.—Some people of this type are inclined to be too inquisitive; it may lead them into trouble this week. You will receive a present of clothing, will hear of the illness of a friend or relation, and will make an unexpected journey.

LIBRA (the Scales), Sept. 24th to Oct. 23rd.—Be careful how you judge new acquaintances whom you will be meeting this week. There is one who will later become one of your best friends, though at first you will start "picking holes in him." You will do a lot of work at something you like doing. Ask favours this week.

SCORPIO (the Scorpion), Oct. 24th to Nov. 22nd.—Save your money—you will shortly find something for which you will need it. Your luck will be much better towards the end of the week than at the beginning. If you have a hidden trouble, tell it to a friend or relation, and you will be helped.

SAGITTARIUS (the Archer), Nov. 23rd to Dec. 22nd.—If you have been dodging a job that you ought to have finished some time ago, do it now, or there will be difficulties ahead for you. If you have to choose a career for yourself, try to get into the medical, legal, or literary professions. You are due to have a strange adventure this week.

CAPRICORN (the Goat), Dec. 23rd to Jan. 20th.—An argument or quarrel with someone of the opposite sex, probably a relation. You will hear good news from an unexpected quarter. Altogether a very eventful week, but an unlucky one for starting new ventures.

BIRTHDAY INDICATIONS.

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 22nd.—An excellent year ahead for anything connected with money, though probably many setbacks in your work. A new friendship, with, strangely enough, someone fat! Perhaps we ought to warn Baggy Trimble, Billy Bunter, and the other perambulating lard-tubs what's coming to them!

THURSDAY, Dec. 23rd.—Next year will be a comparatively unimportant one for you. Not much progress, nor yet serious slipping back. You will be held up in some of your pet plans by other people. If ill, you will soon be restored to health.

FRIDAY, Dec. 24th.—Reach out with both hands to grab the chances that come your way this year. If you have been waiting to make an important change in your life, do it now. You are due to have at least one really astonishing stroke of luck which you haven't expected—something as staggering as if Billy Bunter actually received his famous postal order!

SATURDAY, Dec. 25th.—A big change in your family life; you may even leave home for

some reason. A year that will be a jumble of good and bad luck. Don't take on a lot of new schemes; go ahead with those you have in hand.

SUNDAY, Dec. 26th.—A happy year, though no very important changes. Your best luck will come around next August. At school or at work, everything will pass smoothly. At sports, you will do your best yet. Someone may spread a story about you which will harm you.

MONDAY, Dec. 27th.—The stars indicate good luck for you in the spring and summer; there will be upsets during the remainder of the year. An unexpected long journey; it will be mixed up with the fulfilment of your greatest wish.

TUESDAY, Dec. 28th.—A year in which older people's help will be appreciated. A possibility of being laid up in bed for a short time. And if that sounds gloomy, you can cheer yourself up with the prospect of a long holiday, in which you are going to have the time of your life.

PROFESSOR ZARRO.

HE'S FAT! HE'S FATUOUS! AND HE'S A "FIBBER"! BUT HE'S WILY, TOO, AS TOM MERRY & CO. DISCOVER TO THEIR COST BEFORE THEY GET WISE TO—

TRIMBLE *the* TWISTER!



As Figgins & Co. came into their study, they saw a podgy youth sitting in the armchair before the fire, fast asleep. The empty plates and dishes on the table told what had happened to the New House Co.'s feed!

CHAPTER 1.

Noblesse Oblige!

"I WANT you fellows to do me a great favah."

D'Arcy of the Fourth made that remark in Study No. 6 at St. Jim's.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were talking footer in the study. But they politely rang off as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made his remark.

D'Arcy had just come in, with a letter in his hand.

There was a thoughtful expression upon D'Arcy's face. His manner as he spoke was hesitant. His chums regarded him curiously.

"A great favour?" repeated Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You want the general opinion of the study on your new tie?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Or do you want us to come down to old Wiggs', and help you select a new topper?"

"It is nothin' of the sort. There is a new chap comin' into the Fourth Form," said Arthur Augustus.

The chums of Study No. 6 received that information without

being greatly impressed. It was not at all an uncommon thing for new boys to come into the Fourth Form.

"Well, let him come," said Blake, puzzled. "What does it matter?"

"His name is Twimble."

"Ye gods! What a name!" said Digby.

"Wats!"

"Gussy means Trimble, most likely," remarked

Blake. "It's only his beautiful accent. So a new chap is coming into the Fourth, and his name's Trimble. I can't quite see that it matters to us, except that we'd better see that he isn't shoved into this study. We couldn't do with five."

Arthur Augustus looked troubled.

"I suppose five would be wathah a ewowd," he remarked.

"That's all right," said Blake.

"He won't come into Study No. 6. If he does, we'll scalp him and make him change out!"

"Weally, you know—"

"Rely on us!" said Herries.

"We'll see that Twimble, or Trimble, doesn't plant himself in here! But Railton wouldn't shove him in here when we're THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Baggy Trimble comes to St. Jim's with a tremendous appetite and no money. But his wants are soon satisfied—at the expense of his new Form-fellows!

four already. There's lots of studies with only three."

"The fact is, deah boys"—Arthur Augustus hesitated—"the—fact is, I used to know this chap Twimble."

"No harm in that," said Blake reassuringly. "Don't worry, old chap. It's rather a worry when a new kid persists in knowing you. But we'll look after you, and we'll help you to keep him at armslength. So that's the great favour, is it? You leave it to us, Gussy!"

"But that is not what I want at all," said Arthur Augustus. "The—fact is—ahem!—I was goin' to ask you if—you would mind the chap comin' into this study?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Blake. "You want to plant a new kid in this study when we're four already—crowded out as we are with your silk hats and Herries' boots!"

"Leave my boots alone!" growled Herries.

"It can't be did!" said Blake decidedly. "We can't have the harmony of the study busted up by a stranger coming in. Aren't we a happy family, just as we are? We've learned to stand one another as patiently as anything. Blow Trimble!"

"Yes, blow him!" said Digby.

"Blow him baldheaded!" said Herries.

Arthur Augustus looked reproachful.

"I do not often ask you chaps a great favah!" he said.

Blake groaned.

"Oh, rats! We don't want any strange dogs in the kennel! But if you're going to look like that about it—Br-r-r-r! If you're awfully chummy with the beast, I suppose it's up to us to be chummy with the beast, too. Why haven't you ever mentioned him, if he's such a dear old pal?"

"As a mattah of fact, he is not a deah old pal, Blake. I have met the chap, but, weally, I hardly know him. I did not like him vewy much, eithah."

"Well, you crass ass, are you asking us to have him here to worry us because you hardly know him and you don't like him very much?" asked Blake indignantly.

"N-no! The fact is, I had a lettah fwom him. But wead it, deah boys, and you will see for yourselves. I wegard it as bein' up to me; it is a case of noblesse oblige, you know."

"Noblesse rats!" growled Blake.

Arthur Augustus laid the letter on the table, and the three juniors read it together. It did not please them. It ran:

"Dear Gussy,—I dare say you've herd about my coming to St. Jim's. I arrive on Wednesday afternoon, two-thirty, at Rylcombe. As I am going into the Fourth, I expect to see a lot of you. I'm looking forward to a talk about old times. I suppose you can arrange for me to be in your study? That will be riping. Don't forget to mete me at the station on Wednesday; you mite bring a car or something.—Your old pal,

"BAGLEY TRIMBLE."

"Well, that sounds as if the chap had known you all your life and was as pally as possible!" grunted Blake.

"Yaes, wathah! I nevah suspected Baggy Twimble of entahtainin' such gweat fwendship towards me," confessed Arthur Augustus. "But as he feels so vewy fwiently, I cannot vewy well wepulse him. That would be wude and unfeelin', wouldn't it?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Bow-wow!"

"What are the old times you're going to talk about?" asked Digby.

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I weally do not wemembah. I have met the chap only twice, and I don't know his people at all. But apparently he felt vewy chummy all the time, and I nevah noticed it."

"Where on earth did he learn to spell?" asked Herries.

"Appawvently he has not learned at all, Hewwies."

"What an utter bounder!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"The chap's met you twice, and you don't really know him, and now he's trying to fasten on you like a leech!" growled Blake. "He's a bounder! Asking you to take him into your study when you don't know him! Awful nerve!"

"I twust you are not goin' to wefuse my wequest, Blake?"

"Oh, rats! I tell you that chap's a bounder, and we don't want bounders in Study No. 6!" said Blake peevishly.

"I feel bound to accede to his wequest, Blake. Aftah all, it is up to an old hand to look aftah a new kid a bit. I must take him in."

"He's taking you in, you mean!" grunted Herries.

"Wats! I cannot wefuse to make him my studymate, as he particulahly wequests me to do. If you fellows wefuse to have him here, I shall have no wecourse but to change into anothah study!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"We'll give him a trial!" growled Blake. "Write and tell him he can come, and if we can't stand him, we'll pitch him out on his neck!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I will wite and tell him he can come into the study," said Arthur Augustus. "Thank you vewy much, deah boys, for gwantin' me such a gweat favah!"

To which Blake, Herries, and Digby replied with one voice:

"Rats!"

CHAPTER 2.

Lowther's Little Game!

"**W**HEREFORE that worried brow, my son?" Tom Merry of the Shell greeted Jack Blake with that question in the Form-room passage the next day.

Blake, Herries, and Dig were chatting together, when the Terrible Three came out of their Form-room. And noting the unusually sombre expression of the chums of the Fourth, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther kindly stopped to inquire the cause.

There was nothing to worry about so far as the Terrible Three could see. It was a keen winter's afternoon, and a half-holiday; glorious weather for footer, and a Form match was fixed for the afternoon.

Tom Merry and Lowther were in the Shell team, and Manners was going out with his beloved camera. Hence, from the point of view of the trio, everything in the garden was lovely.

"Worrying over your prospects in the Form match?" queried Monty Lowther. "Don't worry, dear boys; the result is a dead cert, anyway."

"Fathead!" said Blake. "Never mind the Form match—we're good enough to beat you Shellfish. Gussy's playing the giddy ox again."



ST. JIM'S JINGLES

No. 11.

ARTHUR
AUGUSTUS
D'ARCY.

HATS off to this illustrious spark!

And trembling from afar, see
The monocle that serves to mark
The calm repose of D'Arcy.
His fearful frown and charming clothes
To nothingness will thrust us;
And we must grovel at the toes
Of him—the great Augustus!

The “knut” so dashing and divine,
Who swanks in Piccadilly,
Compared with Gussy's show and shine
Is rendered more than silly.
And monarchs who in might excel,
Replete with radiant glory,
Must bow their heads before the swell
Of Martin Clifford's story.

Among the foremost of his chums
Are Digby, Blake, and Herries,
And in their “den” when evening comes
His stately self he buries.
While Towser, most devout of dogs,
Encamps within the study,
And renders Gussy's spotless togs
Extremely soiled and muddy.

With scant regard the bulldog treats
His striped and shapely trousers,
And many a threat of slaughter greets
Each merry trick of Towser's.
From time to time the burly beast
Makes someone come a cropper;
And once he had a splendid feast
Off D'Arcy's Sunday topper.

The swell of all St. Jim's has got
Admirers by the dozen;
For him they do not care a jot—
But, oh, his charming cousin!
A bright and glowing gem is she,
Who merits adoration;
And oft they drink her health at tea
With noisy acclamation.

Although he dotes upon his dress,
Augustus, on occasions,
Has helped his comrades to repress
Some fierce and wild invasions.
And Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn
Have often met disaster;
For Gussy's blows on cheek and chin
Mean yards of sticking-plaster!

Behind the cold and crushing glance
So frequently imparted,
Are found the feelings which enhance
The truly tender-hearted.
And though the ways of Vere de Vere
On Gus are plainly written,
It would indeed be hard, I fear,
To find a nobler Briton.

Next Week: TOM MERRY.

“He's always doing it,” grunted Herries.
“He is—he are!” agreed Monty Lowther.
“What's the trouble now?”

“There's a new rotter coming here,” said Blake.
“Chap named Trimble. He seems to be a regular
bounder, and he's stuck on to Gussy because he's
met him once or twice somewhere, and insists on
palling with him. And the duffer is going to let
him do it; and he's planting him in our study.
It's what he calls noblesse oblige.”

“Hard cheese!” said Tom Merry. “But the
chap may be all right. How do you know he's a
rotter?”

“Oh, I know he is! There's his letter, for one
thing. And if he were first-rate, we shouldn't want
him in our study. But we've agreed to give Gussy
his head. You know what an ass he is!”

“We do! We do!”

“The chap is a rank outsider, and he's stuck
on to Gussy because he's got an axe to grind, of
course. But it's no good telling Gussy, as he
never suspects anybody of anything.”

Tom Merry laughed.

“Good old Gussy,” he said. “Gussy is worth
a guinea a box to any chap who isn't very
scrupulous.”

“And the duffer is chucking the footer this
afternoon to go and meet the beast at the station,”

said Blake. “Actually standing out of the Form
match. As if a new kid couldn't walk to the
school by himself. And it won't do. Figgins is
captaining the Fourth, and he won't have it.
Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence have gone out for
the afternoon, and Koumi Rao, Kerruish, and
Reilly are going to the pictures. So we're short
of men. I've told Gussy to ask somebody else to
meet the bounder, but he babbles out noblesse
oblige.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“There's nothing to cackle at!” growled Blake.
“We want Gussy in the front line this afternoon.
Figgins is jawing him now in the quad. Let's go
and jaw him, too!”

“Let's all jaw him together,” grinned Lowther.
“The jawfulness will be terrific, as that Indian
chap at Greyfriars says.”

The chums of the School House proceeded into
the quadrangle. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was
there, talking to Figgins—or, rather, listening to
him. Figgins of the Fourth looked wrathful. He
had reason to be wrathful. With a depleted team
for the Form match in the afternoon, Figgins
wasn't inclined to lose one of his best wingers.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn, Piggy's chums, were
with him, and were adding their expostulations.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

to those of Figgins. The three New House juniors, in fact, looked rather excited.

Arthur Augustus looked distressed. Like Desdemona of old, he perceived before him a divided duty.

"What do you think of the duffer?" Figgins exclaimed, as the School House juniors came up. "He wants to cut the match to meet a new kid. Blow the new kid!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Not that he's worth much in the footer team," said Figgins disparagingly. "The School House aren't much at footer, anyway. But the others are out of it, and we can't replace him at a minute's notice."

"You ought to play, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, I am quite aware of that, deah boy. But Twimble is comin' to Wycombe by the two-thirty—"

"Blow Trimble!" growled Figgins.

"Yaas, but I have w'ritten to him that I will meet him there."

"Send some other silly ass, then," suggested Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Can't a new kid walk from the station?" demanded Figgins.

"Yaas, but he requested me—"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, you New House boundah—"

"You School House chump—"

"Peace, my infants!" said Monty Lowther, interposing. "Let me make a suggestion. Let me pour oil on the troubled waters. Gussy, old chap, so long as somebody meets the new kid, it will be all serene. I'll go."

"You, Lowthah?"

"Yes. You can rely upon me to do the thing in good style," said Lowther solemnly. "Although I could not hope to attain the finished grace of the D'Arcy manner, I would do my humble best."

"Weally, you ass—"

"My manners," continued Lowther, "are generally considered nice and genteel. I have often been called a nice boy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will keep in mind that, representing you, I am bound to rival the courtesy of a Chesterfield or a Grandison," said Lowther with an owl-like expression. "I guarantee that Master Trimble shall have no fault to find. I will be quite polished."

"I wegard you as an ass, Lowthah. How-evah—"

"But you're in my team, Monty, you ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You can put in Manners instead."

"I'm going out with my camera," said Manners. "Give your camera a rest, old chap. It will save you something in films."

"You ass—"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you are willin' to chuck up the footah to go and meet my fwiend, I should be vewy much obliged to you!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Done!"

"Pway be vewy polite to him," said Arthur Augustus, a little anxiously. "Bwing him here in the cab, and put down the expenses to me. Pway take him into our study and make him comfortable."

"Certainly!"

"Thank you vewy much, deah boy."

"In the cires, Figgins, I shall be able to play,"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

said Arthur Augustus. "You can wely on beatin' the Shell now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus went into the House, relieved in his mind. Figgins & Co. strolled away, Figgy also relieved in his mind. Monty Lowther was smiling serenely. Perhaps it was the unconsciousness of a kind action that made him smile, like Good Little Georgie in the story book. But his chums, knowing Monty Lowther's humorous proclivities, suspected something more.

"Look here, what's the little game?" asked Blake.

"Game?" said Lowther, with a pained look.

"Yes; you're not chucking up the Form match simply to oblige Gussy. Are you thinking of japing that bounder Trimble?"

"I'm thinking," said Lowther, with dignity, "of obliging Gussy, and obliging you chaps at the same time. Also of obliging Figgins & Co."

"Eh?"

"If this new chap, Trimble, is some rank outsider, you don't want him in your study. Well, and we don't want him in the School House if he's some beastly toad, do we? I'm going to see him, and size him up. If he's up to our high standard, I'm going to treat him like a long-lost brother. If he's the kind of worm you think he is, I'm going to bring him here and—"

"And what?"

"And plant him in the New House!"

"The New House?" ejaculated Blake.

"Why not? If he's an awful bounder, the New House is the proper place for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll stick him in Figgins' study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House juniors.

"And we may be able to fix it to keep him there permanently. There are ways and means," said Lowther. "It all depends on the kind of chap he is. But not a word to Gussy. He might object."

"Ha, ha, ha! He might!"

And not a word was breathed to the swell of St. Jim's on the subject. Arthur Augustus was feeling very grateful to the humorist of the Shell. Probably, if he had known all, his gratitude would have been considerably diminished.

CHAPTER 3.

The Limit!

"I'M off! Mind you beat the Fourth!"

That was Monty Lowther's farewell. He sauntered down to the gates to walk to the station.

Tom Merry and Manners were chuckling on the steps of the School House when D'Arcy came out.

"Lowthah gone, deah boys?" he asked.

"Yes."

"It is weally vewy good-natuahed of Lowthah," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I twust he will get on all wight with Twimble. I weally don't know what he's like, you know, excepting that he's wathah fat, and dwesses wathah loudly, and has a little wed nose."

"There's a picture for you!" grinned Manners.

"Ready?" said Blake, coming out with an overcoat over his football garb. "Figgy's on the ground now. Get a move on!"

The School House juniors walked down to Little Side. Fourth and Shell lined up for the Form match. In the Form matches, fellows of

both Houses played together for their Form, and Figgins of the New House generally captained the Fourth, while Tom Merry skippered the Shell.

As soon as the ball was kicked off, Arthur Augustus had to forget all about the expected new boy. The game gave him plenty to think about, and other considerations had to be banished from his mind.

Fortunately, his old acquaintance was in safe hands. Monty Lowther was on his way to the station to look after him.

Lowther arrived in Rylcombe in good time for the train. He went on the platform to wait for it to come in. Lowther was feeling a little curious as to what the new junior would be like. Blake & Co.'s prejudice might be founded simply upon the fact that Trimble was going to crowd them in their study.

Lowther intended to "size up" the new fellow for himself. If he were all right, he would carry out his duties in a way that Arthur Augustus could not fail to approve of. If he weren't all right, then Lowther's humorous proclivities would have free play.

Monty Lowther was a born humorist, and he would have walked a mile out of his way, any day, for a jape. It is to be feared that Lowther hoped that the new fellow wouldn't be "all right." He did not want to miss the footer match for nothing. But he was quite prepared to do the right thing and to restrain his sense of humour if Trimble were not the rank outsider depicted by Study No. 6.

The train steamed in and stopped. A podgy face looked out of a carriage window. A squeaky voice called out to the old porter:

"Porter, is this Rylcombe?"

"Yessir!"

The carriage door flew open, and the stout youth tumbled out.

Monty Lowther eyed him attentively. He could guess that this was Master Trimble. He was in Etons, and there was no other fellow in Etons among the passengers who were alighting. Master Trimble was short and stout for his age, and did not look very fit. There was a smear of jam on his face, which hinted that he had been refreshing himself, on the journey, with jam tarts.

He had a coat on his arm. He stood on the platform looking about him, evidently in expectation of seeing someone he knew.

Monty Lowther came towards him. He did not think much of Master Trimble at the first view, but he meant to give him a chance.

"Trimble?" he asked.

The junior looked at him.

"Yes; that's my name."

"You're coming to St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"I'm Lowther, of the Shell. I've come here to meet you."

Trimble grunted.

"Hasn't D'Arcy come?" he asked.

"He's playing footer this afternoon," explained Lowther. "I've come in his place."

"That's all very well, but you see, I depended on D'Arcy coming. I suppose they'll ask me for a ticket when I get out here, won't they?"

Lowther stared.

"Yes, I suppose so. Have you lost your ticket?"

"I didn't take one," explained Trimble. "My pater thought I had my ticket when he saw me off, but I hadn't. I had to get something to eat on the train. I got that instead of a ticket."

"Do you mean to say that you've travelled without a ticket?"



"'Arf-a-crown, please!" said old George, the driver. Trimble did not seem to hear. He walked into the quadrangle. Monty Lowther breathed a little hard, and felt in his pocket for the money.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Yes! I've dodged through all right so far," grinned Trimble. "I say, I suppose you know the porter at this station? I dare say you could work it for me to get out all right—what?"

"Work it!" repeated Lowther. "Help you to swindle the railway company, do you mean?" Trimble snorted.

"Oh rats! You needn't put it like that."

"I don't see any other way of putting it," said Lowther, his wrath beginning to rise. It was not agreeable for a fellow—a perfect stranger to him—to ask him to become a confederate in a swindle. "If you don't pay, it's swindling, isn't it?"

"Well, I relied upon D'Arcy being here!" said Trimble sulkily. "He owes me money, and he could have squared!"

"D'Arcy owes you money?"

"Yes, rather—a lot. He was always borrowing money of me!"

Lowther paused.

"Well, Gussy told me to see you through, and put down the exes to him," he said. "You can pay as you go off. What was the ticket?"

"Nine shillings—first-class."

Monty Lowther felt in his pockets. He did not always have nine shillings about him, but, fortunately, he was in funds this afternoon. He handed three half-crowns, a shilling, and a sixpence to Master Trimble, who took the money carelessly, and slipped it into his pocket.

"Got a box with you?" asked Lowther.

"Yes. Careful with that box, porter. Put it on a cab!"

"Yessir!"

The porter trundled the box away. Lowther followed with the new boy. Lowther's face was a little grim now. On the strength of Trimble's letter to D'Arcy, Study No. 6 had pronounced him a bounder. Within five minutes of making his acquaintance, Lowther had discovered that he was even more of an utter bounder than Study No. 6 suspected.

Lowther passed through the gate, and Trimble paused as his ticket was demanded.

"Hadden't time to get a ticket," he said. "How much from London, third-class?"

"Five shillings, sir."

"There you are!"

Trimble paid five shillings, and rejoined Lowther, who was waiting for him. He was grinning now.

"Come on!" he said.

Lowther did not move. His eyes were gleaming.

"You've paid the man five shillings," he said.

"Yes, that's right—come on!"

"But you travelled first-class!"

"Don't shout, you ass; he'll hear you!"

"I jolly well intend him to hear me, if you don't pay what you owe!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, his wrath rising. "You owe him four bob!"

"Rot! We'll whack that out—two bob each, if you like. That's fair!"

"Fair, is it, you rotter?"

"Eh?"

"If you're a swindler, I'm not one! Give the man his four bob!"

Trimble shrugged his shoulders.

"Give him four bob yourself, if you're rolling in money!" he said.

"I gave you the money to pay him!" exclaimed Lowther hotly.

"I'll settle that with Gussy. Didn't you say he told you to stand the exes in his name?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Yes; but—"

"Well, come on!"

Lowther drew a deep breath. He was greatly inclined to take Master Trimble by the neck and knock his head against the wall. He restrained himself, however, and returned to the barrier.

The ticket-collector was going, when Lowther stopped him.

"There's another four bob to pay on that chap's ticket," said Lowther. "He—ahem—made a mistake. He travelled first. There you are!"

The man stared a little, and took the money. Monty Lowther rejoined Trimble, and they walked out of the station. Trimble snorted.

"Might as well have lent that to me as wasted it!" he growled.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Lowther.

Trimble paused.

"You say Gussy told you to stand the exes for him?" he asked.

"Yes, he did."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm rather short of tin. Gussy owes me twenty-five bob. You've handed me nine; that leaves twenty."

"Where did you pick up your arithmetic?" asked Lowther.

"Ahem! I mean it leaves eighteen."

"It leaves sixteen," said Lowther.

"Well, sixteen, then," said Trimble peevishly.

"Suppose you settle up for Gussy?"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, he told you—"

"He didn't tell me to settle his debts!" growled Lowther. "And I've only got a few bob left! Let's get to St. Jim's, for goodness' sake!"

Another snort from Trimble.

"Isn't there a place here where a chap can get some grub?" he asked. "I'm hungry!"

"After blowing the price of your ticket in grub?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

"That was only a snack. Where's there a shop?"

"Down the street," said Lowther. "I'll take you there. What about your box?"

"We'll take it in the cab."

"No need for a cab to the school. It isn't a long walk. They can send on your box to-day. It won't cost much then."

"Look here, I'm jolly well not going to walk! I'm accustomed to cabs," said Trimble. "As for money, I never consider it!"

"Rolling in it—what?"

"Well, my people are all rich," said Trimble. "My pater's rolling in quids. So's my uncle. I have a whacking allowance. My weakness is that I'm always lending money to fellows, and so I get short of tin sometimes. I suppose Gussy wouldn't object to my having a snack here, as he's told you to foot the exes?"

"I—I suppose not. I've got only enough to pay for the cab if we take it, though. Still, you can settle for the food."

"No fear—I mean, no thanks! Couldn't we get a feed on tick?" asked Trimble. "I suppose they trust St. Jim's chaps. And I dare say they know you well, too."

"They do," assented Lowther. "But I'm not going to ask them for tick. Why can't you pay? You've got my four bob."

"I—I say, let's get to the school," said Trimble, changing the subject. "I dare say Gussy will have something decent in the study. What a rotten taxicab! Can't a chap get a decent one here?"

"Yes; if you telephone to Wayland for one. You'll have to wait half an hour, and pay anything up to ten bob."

"We'll take this one," said Trimble.

"Much better walking on a ripping afternoon like this!" urged Lowther.

"You can walk, if you like. I'm not going to."

Trimble stepped into the cab. Lowther hesitated for a moment. He would have greatly preferred to walk back to the school by himself, and leave Master Trimble to his own devices, but to do so would have been to abandon his humorous designs upon Master Trimble. He followed the new junior into the cab, and the vehicle rattled away down the old High Street.

CHAPTER 4.

Taking the Stranger In!

THERE was silence in the cab for some time. Master Trimble extracted a packet of toffee from his pocket, and proceeded to gnaw it. It did not seem to occur to him to offer any to his companion.

It was not till the toffee was disposed of that he made a remark.

"I feel better now," he observed. "But I hope there'll be a decent tea at the school. What sort of grub do you get?"

"Pretty good!"

"Plenty of it, I hope?" asked Trimble anxiously.

"Oh, yes; especially in the New House!" said Lowther.

"Huh! I'm booked for the School House."

"Sorry!" said Lowther sympathetically.

Lowther's mind was quite made up by this time. If he could possibly contrive it, Master Bagley Trimble was booked for the New House.

"What are the fellows like in Study No. 6?" asked Trimble.

"Well, there's Gussy. You know him."

"My oldest pal," said Trimble.

Lowther grinned.

He knew exactly how old a pal Trimble was with the swell of St. Jim's.

"Then there's Blake," said Lowther. "He's a good chap—a very good chap—and, of course, a fellow wouldn't have it up against him because he hits out rather often. He may knock you down one minute, but he'd pick you up the next. I suppose you're rather hefty at boxing?"

"N-no."

"Well, you'll have rather a rough time in Study No. 6, I'm afraid. Still, Blake is one of the best, and it's not true that he nearly killed a new chap once. That was an exaggeration. The fellow was simply laid up in the hospital for a week."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Then there's Herries. Herries is a good sort—a really good sort—and very fond of dogs. He has a bulldog, that he brings into the study, who always goes for strangers. You're not afraid of bulldogs?"

"N-no. B-but—"

"Then there's Digby—a very quiet chap. He never has a fight on his hands more than once a day. Being a new chap, you may get licked, to start with; but you don't mind facing the music, I suppose?"

"Oh dear!"

The new junior was looking alarmed. Monty Lowther's description of Study No. 6 was not encouraging.

"But there's a good rule in that study," went

on Lowther. "A new chap there is expected to pay his footing. You'll be expected to stand tea every day for the rest of the term. But that won't hurt you, as you're rolling in money."

"I jolly well won't!" roared Trimble.

"I'm afraid you'll get ragged, then," said Lowther sorrowfully. "Perhaps you might get into the New House, instead. It's not too late—say, Figgins' study."

"Who's Figgins?"

"A splendid chap! Best-tempered chap in the world!" said Lowther. "He has two study-mates—Kerr and Wynn. Kerr is a ripping fellow! Wynn is the very best, and he has a lovely feed every day at tea-time."

Trimble's face brightened up.

"That sounds all right," he remarked.

"What Fatty Wynn likes," pursued Lowther calmly, "is to have a good feed, and to see other fellows enjoying it. There's one thing you'd have to be careful of—always eat plenty, and ask for more. Then you'll get on with him!"

"My word!" Trimble's little piggy eyes glistened. "That would suit me down to the ground."

"Only you mustn't offer to pay your whack,"



"Don't be suspicious, constable. My pal always races past haystacks. He's afraid of catching hay fever!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss J. Venables, 77, Lichfield Road, Bloxwich, Staffs.

added Lowther. "That would—ahem!—offend him."

"Good egg!"

Lowther had "sized up" the new junior correctly. Trimble's podgy face was simply beaming now.

"I'll give you a tip about getting on with Kerr, too," said Lowther. "He'll lend you money like anything, if you should happen to want it. Only don't bother him about paying it back again. Just let it go."

Trimble rubbed his fat hands.

"That's the study I want to get into!" he exclaimed. "Look here, why should I go into the School House if I don't choose?"

"No reason at all," said Lowther, without showing a sign of the satisfaction he was feeling. "You start in Figgins' study, and make yourself at home there. Report yourself to the New House master as a new chap."

"But—but it's been arranged for me to go into the School House. Would it be all right?"

"Right as rain! You may have to see the Head, and you'll tell him that you want very much to be in the New House, and he'll most likely let it go at that."

"Then it's a go!"

Monty Lowther felt inclined to shout "Hurrah!" but he restrained himself.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

The cab stopped at St. Jim's, and Taggles came out of his lodge to take the box down. Trimble and Lowther stepped out.

"Arf-a-crown, please!" said old George, the driver.

Trimble did not seem to hear. He walked on into the quadrangle. Monty Lowther looked after him for a moment, and breathed a little hard. Then he handed old George three shillings, and followed Trimble.

On the football ground two matches were going on—a House match of the seniors, with Kildare and Monteith in the field, and the junior Form match. There was a loud shouting from Little Side.

"Goal! Goal! Good old Talbot! Goal!"

The Form match was going strong, and the Shell seemed to be prospering.

Trimble did not even glance towards the playing fields. Evidently, he was not interested in football. Monty Lowther piloted him towards the New House.

"This is the show!" he remarked. "Most of the fellows are on the footer ground now. Figgins & Co. will come in later. They'll be—ahem!—delighted to see you. But you must make yourself at home in the study. They hate a chap to stand on ceremony. For instance, if you are hungry, take anything you find there to eat. Don't spare the grub. That would offend them."

"Right! I won't."

"Especially Fatty Wynn. I happen to know that he's laid in a ripping rabbit pie for a feed after the match. Do you care for rabbit pie?"

"What-ho!"

"Then there you are! Don't spare it! If you can finish up the whole pie Wynn will treat you—ahem!—like a long-lost brother."

"I'll jolly well try!" grinned Trimble. "I say, I was told that I have to report myself to the Housemaster, first of all."

"I'll take you to Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff's study," said Lowther. "You mayn't like him at first sight. His manner is against him. But he has a heart of—of gold. His chief weakness is letting the chaps have more food than is really good for them. And the fellows—ahem!—complain of too much pastry—jam tarts, meringues, and doughnuts, you know—"

"By gum!"

"And Ratty—I mean Mr. Ratcliff—is rather slack in looking after a fellow's work," said Lowther calmly. "He'll never ask you for your lines—ahem!—and will insist upon your taking a rest from lessons if you feel—ahem!—tired. If that wouldn't suit you—"

"Great Scott! That's just what I want!" ejaculated Trimble.

"Then you'll get on here. When you see Mr. Ratcliff, tell him you want to be in his House—butter him up, you know. He'll take you, if he can, because he's jealous about fellows' people preferring to put them in the School House. If he decides to have you he can easily arrange it with the Head. Here you are! That's his study. I'll come back for you!"

"Right-ho!"

Trimble went on to Mr. Ratcliff's study door and tapped. Monty Lowther strolled out of the New House, smiling serenely, and sauntered down to the football ground. The whistle had gone for half-time.

"Hallo, here's Lowther!" exclaimed Blake, coming up to the ropes. "Did you meet that new blunder?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"I've met him."

"What's he like?"

"The limit!"

Blake snorted.

"And he's going to be planted on us!" he growled.

"Not if I can help it!" grinned Lowther. "At the present moment he is asking Mr. Ratcliff to take him into the New House."

Blake gasped.

"Oh crumbs! How on earth did you work it? Shush! Here's Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up, very flushed from the footer.

"Where's my friend Twimble, dear boy?"

"Interviewing the Housemaster," said Lowther. He was careful not to specify which Housemaster.

"Vewy good! Pewwaps you would have the great kindness, Lowthah, to see that he gets a feed, if he's hungry afah his journey?"

"I've arranged that already—a rabbit pie," said Lowther.

"Thank you vewy much."

"Not at all!" said Lowther cheerfully. "It's a pleasure. I've looked after Trimble properly, as he ought to be looked after!"

Blake burst into a chuckle, and Arthur Augustus gave him a severe look.

"Weally, Blake, there is nothin' funny in Lowthah lookin' afah the new chap in this wip-pin' mannah! I am weally surprised at you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Hallo, there's the whistle!" said Lowther. "Leave your esteemed pal in my hands, Gussy! Rely on me to see him fixed!"

And the team lined up for the second half, and Monty Lowther watched them smilingly, feeling very pleased with himself and things generally.

CHAPTER 5.

Free Tuck for Trimble!

"COME in!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Ratcliff always snapped. He was a snappish gentleman. He looked round irritably as the door opened, and the new junior came in.

Lowther had diplomatically warned the new fellow that he wouldn't like Mr. Ratcliff at first sight. The warning had been needed. Mr. Ratcliff, with his keen, sharp eyes and thin lips, did not impress Baggy Trimble as a good-tempered gentleman.

"Well, what is it?" asked Mr. Ratcliff. "Who are you?"

"If you please, sir, I'm the new boy—Trimble!"

"Indeed! You are probably in the wrong House. I have not been informed that a new boy was coming into this House."

"If you please, sir, I want to come into the New House!" Trimble was a little nervous under Mr. Horace Ratcliff's glittering eyes, but he stuck to his guns. It was necessary to "get round" the Housemaster if he was to dwell in that land flowing with milk and honey, which Lowther had so eloquently described.

"There was a mistake, sir!" Trimble was not a truthful youth. "S-somehow, sir, I was put down for the School House, but my people really want me to be in the New House, sir—with you, sir! My father was specially keen on my being in Mr. Ratcliff's House. It was his dearest wish, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff thawed considerably.

He was not popular, and he knew it. But though he would never take the trouble to make

Special Christmas Stamps

They helped worthy causes—and are worthy of a place in your album.



Uplifted hands round this stamp's shield are honouring one of the great moments in Swiss history.

IF you're looking for a little group of stamps in which to "specialise" in a humble way, you cannot do better than choose the "Children's" stamps of Switzerland. They are, for the most part, really beautiful productions, and so inexpensive that they are within the reach of most pockets. And, unlike most other stamps, they have helped to do real good, in addition to performing their usual postal duties.

Every Christmas-time, without almost a single break since 1913, Switzerland has issued stamps bearing the words "Pro Juventute" (Latin for "For the Little Ones"). These are sold in the Swiss post offices at small increased charges over their normal face value, the extra charge being made to help swell the funds of the Children's section of the Swiss Society of Public Utility.

The first stamp of all of this kind, issued Christmas, 1913, showed Helvetia, Switzerland's symbolic national figure, with the mighty Matterhorn behind her. Between 1915 and 1917 examples of the various types of national Swiss costume figured on eight different stamp items. Then from 1918 until 1930, with breaks only in 1927 and 1929, appeared arms stamps which made stamp history.



Sailing ships beside the shield on this stamp remind us of the importance of the Lake of Lucerne as a waterway.

A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM TELL.

Designed by Rudolf Munger, a famous heraldic artist from Berne, they depict the arms of the various cantons, or counties, of Switzerland, with, behind them, devices appropriate to each canton.

Thus we find Uri, birthplace of famous William Tell (featured on the 10 centimes issue of 1918), has a number of the arrow-pierced apples behind its arms, a tribute to Tell's legendary feat of archery, when he shot an apple placed on his little son's head.

himself liked, he resented dislike. It was a little flattering for this new boy to be so keen upon coming into his House, still more flattering to hear that it had been the dearest wish of Trimble senior to place his son with Mr. Ratcliff.

"I see!" said the New House master. "Your father wished you to be placed in my House, but was probably unaware of which House I was master. Is that it?"

"That is it exactly, sir!" said Trimble eagerly. "My father has—has heard a lot about you, sir, and respects you very highly. He would be very disappointed if I were not in your House."

"Well, well! I dare say the matter can be arranged," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I will speak to the Head. For the present you can remain in this House, and we will see. You have just arrived?"

Schwyz, one of the three first Swiss cantons, gave its name to the "Condensed Milk Republic," and on the stamp featuring it (the 7½ centimes of 1920) we see a collection of uplifted hands—a reminder of the Oath of Grutli of 1307, taken by the representatives of this canton during the struggle for Swiss independence.

Another allusion to this incident is made on the 40 centimes item of 1921, which features the Swiss federal arms, supported by the figures of Emperor Albert I, Duke of Austria, and William Tell. It was the former's tyranny which forced the Swiss, under Tell, to revolt.

Necklaces, halberds, bunches of grapes, cog-wheels, bricks, plums, cherries, and chestnuts, sailing ships, and even watches have decorated some of the remaining stamps of this type.

LIKE FATHER CHRISTMAS.

Of recent years men who have won world fame as teachers and welfare workers have been given a well-deserved place on Switzerland's "Pro Juventutes," and in 1928 appeared a portrait of a man who might well be mistaken for jolly old Father Christmas himself. Actually, he is Jean Henri Dunant, that grand old gentleman who helped to found the world-wide Red Cross Society.

This year's items are every bit as lovely as any issued so far. The 5 centimes shows a portrait of General Henri Dufour, who, at the Geneva Convention of 1864, arranged for the humane treatment of the wounded in time of war.

On the 10 centimes specimen appears the venerable head of Nicholas Lowenbrügger, or, as he preferred to be known, Nicholas van der Flüß. He was a much-respected hermit of the canton of Obwalden, who, at the Diet of Stans, in 1481, did more than anyone to bring peace to the warring Swiss. Some people look upon him as the original of Santa Claus, for he was known to many as Brother Klaus.

"Yes, sir."

"I will see you again after I have spoken to Dr. Holmes. Meanwhile, if you are hungry after your journey, you may speak to the House dame. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Trimble, delighted.

He left the study in great spirits.

It was the unaccustomed flattered feeling which had caused Mr. Ratcliff to remember that the new junior might be hungry after his journey. As a rule, he did not trouble much about a junior's comfort. But to Trimble it was a sign that Monty Lowther's glowing description was fully justified.

Trimble walked down the passage, blinking round him with his little, round eyes. He was

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

looking for Monty Lowther, but Monty Lowther had vanished. He decided to look for the House dame instead, and he found a boy in buttons who directed him to her room.

Mrs. Kenwigg, having had the Housemaster's instructions imparted to her, provided Master Trimble with bread and cheese. Bread and cheese did not satisfy Master Trimble, and he partook of it very discontentedly, wondering where was the overflowing pastry, for which the New House—according to Monty Lowther—was famous.

"Oh, here you are!" he growled, as Monty Lowther came in, just as he had finished that frugal snack. "Where the dickens have you been?"

"Seen the Housemaster?" asked Lowther cheerily.

"Yes."

"All serene?"

"Yes, rather! He's going to arrange it for me," grinned Trimble. "I'm booked for this House. I told him it was a mistake my being sent to the School House."

Lowther frowned.

"No need to tell blessed whoppers!" he snapped.

"Oh, what rot!"

Lowther breathed hard through his nose. He was strongly inclined to take Master Trimble by the neck, and jam his head against the table. But he nobly restrained his feelings. At any cost, this unspeakable bounder must be kept out of the School House.

"I'll show you to your study, if you like," he said. "This way."

"Right you are!"

Monty Lowther led the way to Figgins' study, in the Fourth Form passage upstairs.

Trimble looked round the room with considerable satisfaction. The study was not, perhaps, very tidy; but it was cosy and comfortable. He opened the study cupboard at once, and his round eyes glistened. Fatty Wynn had laid in quite a large supply for a feed after the football match; a match on a keen afternoon naturally gave Fatty a tremendous appetite. The goodly array in the study cupboard almost dazzled Master Trimble's greedy eyes.

"Now, make yourself at home," said Lowther. "I've got to get down to the footer, and I'll leave you here. Don't spare the grub."

"By gum, I won't!" agreed Trimble.

"It would be a good idea to ask Mr. Ratcliff to let you share this study. He doesn't care what study you have, and he's bound to say 'Yes.' Go down and ask him at once."

"I'll try those tarts first."

Trimble tried the tarts. There were six of them, and they occupied Trimble about six minutes. Lowther watched his performance with great interest. Judging by Trimble's gastronomic powers, Fatty Wynn was going to have a dangerous rival in his own study.

"Now cut off," said Lowther, when the sixth and last tart had vanished.

"Wait a bit while I have a go at these doughnuts."

The "go" at the doughnuts lasted till the last doughnut had disappeared. Then Trimble's eyes turned on the big rabbit pie. Rabbit pie after tarts and doughnuts was apparently welcome to him.

"Better see the Housemaster about the study," urged Lowther. "Better get it fixed."

"Oh, all right!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1.558.

Trimble reluctantly abandoned the rabbit pie and left the study, to interrupt Mr. Ratcliff once more. Lowther sat down in Figgins' shabby armchair and chuckled loud and long. His little scheme was working perfectly. The thought of what Figgins & Co. would feel like when they found that greedy, unpleasant bounder planted on them, made him gurggle. Lowther felt that Study No. 6 owed him a vote of thanks, and indeed a debt of internal gratitude.

Trimble returned in about five minutes. He was looking elated.

"It's all right," he announced. "Mr. Ratcliff says that if I'm to be in this House, I can be in this study. And he's just going to see the Head about me. He seems rather to like me."

"Well, you're the sort of fellow he would like," remarked Lowther, with sarcasm that was quite lost on Trimble.

"Now for that pie!" said Trimble.

Lowther left him commencing operations on the pie. It was still nearly half an hour before the Form match would be finished. In that time, Lowther considered, there would not be a crumb left in Figgins' study.

Monty Lowther sauntered down to Little Side to watch the finish of the Form match. And when Tom Merry's team came off, winners by two goals to one, Lowther joined heartily in the cheering of the Shell fellows.

CHAPTER 6.

Echo Answers Where!

"**B**AI JOVE! That is a wathah surpwisin' wesult, deah boys!"

Jack Blake grunted.

"Yes; it's a pity, after all, that Figgins didn't let you go to meet your friend, the bounder."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And Fatty, in goal, was thinking about feeding," growled Herries. "We've had rotten luck."

"Never mind, we'll lick them next time," said Blake. "Now about tea."

"Yaas, wathah! We must have a wathah special tea this afternoon, deah boys, as Twimble will be there."

"Blow Trimble!"

"I wondah where Lowthah is," said Arthur Augustus, as he wound his muffler about his neck. "Oh, here he is! Lowthah, deah boy!"

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther amiably.

"Have you left Twimble all wight?"

"Yes, tuckin' into a rabbit pie."

"Thank you vewy much, Lowthah! I twust you did not spare expense in looking aftah Twimble."

"Not at all," said Lowther. "I've got a little bill for you. Nine shillings for his ticket."

"Bai Jove! Didn't he have a ticket?"

"No; he bought tuck instead, and dodged them at the London terminus. Then there's four bob I had to pay on his ticket."

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.

"Why did you pay four shillings on his ticket, Lowthah, aftah givin' him nine shillings to pay for it?"

"I had to," said Lowther, calmly. "Your pal wanted to swindle the railway company by pretending that he had travelled third."

"Gweat Scott!"

"Of course, I thought it out," said Lowther gravely. "I concluded that upon the whole you'd rather your pal didn't swindle them."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.



"Time's up!" said Figgins. "Slaughter him!" Fatty Wynn rushed forward, brandishing the stump. Trimble gave one terrified look, snatched the study door open, and fled.

Arthur Augustus' face was a study. "Weally!" he said, with a gasp. "Weally, bai Jove! This is wathah shockin'. Pewwaps Twimble acted thoughtlessly. Howevah, of course, you were quite wight to settle the diffidence, Lowthah. That is thirteen shillings I owe you."

"And three for the cab," said Lowther. "Your pal is fond of cabs, but has some objection to paying for them himself."

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, there is nothin' to cackle at. That is sixteen shillings, Lowthah. Here you are, deah boy."

"Thanks," said Lowther.

"But the wabbit pie," said D'Arcy. "I cannot allow you to pay for that, Lowthah. It was undahstood that I foot the expenses."

"Oh, that's all right; Fatty Wynn stood the rabbit pie!"

"Bai Jove, that was wippin' of him!"

"Yes, wasn't it?" assented Lowther.

"Where is Twimble now, deah boy?"

"I left him in his study."

"Thank you! I am vewy much obliged to you, Lowthah."

"Not at all. Always at the service of the noble Gustavus," said Monty Lowther affably.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking a little thoughtful as he made his way to the School House with his chums. Blake, Herries, and Digby were grinning.

"That was a wathah unfortunate incident about the waylay ticket," said Arthur Augustus.

"It would have been for Trimble, if he'd been nabbed for swindling," agreed Blake.

"I am sure that Twimble acted thoughtlessly, and that Lowthah has wathah misjudged him."

"Go hon!"

The footballers were going up to the dormitory to change. Arthur Augustus stopped at Study No. 6 on the way up.

"Come on, fathead!" said Herries. "Not going to have tea in your footer clobber, are you?"

"I think I had bettah speak a word to Twimble at once, deah boys. Pway come in and be intwoduuced."

Blake & Co. grunted, and followed D'Arcy into the study. But the study was empty.

"Gone out, I suppose," said Blake. "Come on! You can see him later."

"Oh, all wight!"

The chums of the Fourth went up to the Fourth Form dormitory to change. Tom Merry and Manners passed them in the passage and smiled.

"Seen your old pal?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not yet, deah boy. He has gone out to see the place, I suppose. What are you fellows gwinnin' at?"

Tom Merry and Manners did not explain why they were grinning; they went on their way, still grinning.

Blake & Co. changed in the dormitory, and came down in about ten minutes to the study.

Study No. 6 was still vacant.

"By Jove! I'm as hungry as a hunter!" said Blake. "Shove something on the fire, Dig, while I fill up the kettle. Now, Gussy, make yourself useful!"

"We cannot have tea without Twimble, Blake."

"Oh, blow Trimble!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"I wefuse to have tea without him. You fellows get the tea while I'm lookin' for him. I dare say he's chattin' in some othah study."

Blake, Herries, and Digby grinned cheerfully as Arthur Augustus left the study to look for Trimble. Gussy was not likely to think of looking for him in the New House—and he was not likely to find him anywhere else.

Arthur Augustus looked into the next study, where Kerruish, Reilly, Ray, and Hammond were at tea.

"Have you seen my fwiend Twimble?" he asked. "The new chap who came in with Lowthah, you know."

"Haven't seen him," said Kerruish.

"Sure, I didn't know there was a new chap!" said Reilly.

"Bai Jove! It's vewy odd. I undahstand that Lowthah left him in Study No. 6, eatin' a wabbit pie."

"Offside!" said Ray. "Nobody's been in Study No. 6 while you've been playing footer. I've been here all the time, doing my lines, and I should have heard them. Perhaps he's in Lowther's study."

"Thank you, Way."

Arthur Augustus withdrew, feeling very puzzled. Now he came to think of it, there were no signs in Study No. 6 that a rabbit pie had been consumed there.

Arthur Augustus was perplexed. Apparently Bagley Trimble had never been in Study No. 6 at all. Yet Lowther had distinctly stated that he had left him in his study, eating a rabbit pie. Lowther could not have prevaricated, of course, so the only possible conclusion was that he had planted the new junior in the wrong study. Then Arthur Augustus remembered the humorous proclivities of the Shell fellow and frowned.

He hurried along the Shell passage to Tom Merry's study. His tap at the door was answered by Tom Merry's cheery:

"Come in, fathead!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door and looked in. Tom Merry and Manners were at tea. There was a third cup of tea on the table, and a third plate with a sardine on it. But Monty Lowther was not to be seen.

"Isn't Lowthah here, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Looking for Lowther?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I want to know what he has done with my fwiend Twimble."

"My hat!" said Manners. "Haven't you found Trimble yet?"

"No. It appeahs that Lowthah did not take him to my study, aftah all. I begin to feah that he has played one of his wotten practical jokes on Baggy Twimble."

"Too bad!" said Tom.

"Horrid!" said Manners.

"I do not wish to be ungrateful to Lowthah, but I cannot help suspectin' now that he was goin' to play some wotten jape when he offahed to meet Twimble at the station."

"You don't say so?"

"I do, Tom Mewwy. I should be sowwy to do Lowthah an injustice, but I cannot help thinkin' so. Where is the wottah?"

"Trimble?"

"No; Lowthah."

"Where is the roiter, Manners?" asked Tom Merry, looking at his chum.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1558

"Echo answers—where is the rotter?" replied Manners.

D'Arcy's eye gleamed through his eyeglass.

"I am goin' to find him!" he declared. "And if he has played some wotten twick on Twimble I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'!"

And Arthur Augustus retired from the study and closed the door with a bang.

As his hurried footsteps died away down the passage Monty Lowther emerged from behind the screen in the corner of the study and sat down at the tea-table.

"How lucky Gussy didn't guess I was there!" he remarked. "I've had a narrow escape of getting a feahful thrashing. Pass the tea."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 7.

Not At All Pally!

"HALLO!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn uttered that ejaculation together in a sort of chorus as they came into their study in the New House.

They had expected to find the study empty, the fire out, and no preparations made for tea; but what they found was quite different from what they had expected to find.

The study was not empty, the fire was blazing cheerfully, and tea was on the table—what was left of it. Chiefly crockery and dishes that had been used.

Seated in the armchair before the fire was a podgy youth with a round red nose, fast asleep; he was breathing heavily, evidently as the result of a tremendous feed.

The podgy youth was a stranger to Figgins & Co. They had never seen him before. But he had undoubtedly made himself at home in the study.

Fatty Wynn's eyes fixed upon a large empty piedish, and the expression upon his face was positively terrific.

"Mum-mum-my pie!" he stuttered.

Figgins' gaze turned upon the open door of the study cupboard. Of the great store of good things that had reposed therein not an article remained.

On the table half a loaf graced the board, and a fragment of butter and some sugar and a little milk; everything else had been swept clear.

Figgins & Co. were almost reduced to speechlessness. They had come in hungry after the football match—and this is what they found.

The entrance of the New House Co. had not disturbed the sleeper. Baggy Trimble could do with a great deal of sleep, and he was a sound sleeper. He breathed hard and snored occasionally, oblivious of danger.

"Who is it?" stammered Figgins at last. "I've never seen the cheeky beast before."

"Must be a new chap."

"A new chap!" repeated Figgins. "There was a new chap coming to-day; Gussy's pal, you know. But he was to go into the School House."

Fatty Wynn gasped.

"That's the beast, though! He's scooped my rabbit pie! Mind he doesn't get away while I'm getting a stump!"

Kerr closed the door, and put his back to it. Fatty Wynn looked round furiously for a cricket stump. Figgins took the armchair by the back and tilted it up. The podgy junior was shot out in a heap on the hearthrug like a sack of coke.

"Gr-ooogh!"

Trimble sat up, effectually awakened. He rubbed his eyes with his podgy hands and blinked at the enraged Co.

"Wow-wow! Wharrer you at?" he mumbled. "I don't like being woke up suddenly! It's bad for the digestion! Groogh!"

"What are you doing here?" roared Figgins.

"Scoffing our tommy!" spluttered Fatty Wynn.

"Groogh!"

"Who are you?" demanded Kerr, stirring the podgy youth with his foot.

"Groogh! I'm Trimble!"

"The new School House kid!" said Figgins. "Here, careful with that stump, Fatty! You'll brain him!"

"Leggo! I want to brain him!"

Trimble jumped up, and dodged round the study table in alarm.

Fatty Wynn looked dangerous.

"Here, keep off!" roared Trimble. "Wharrer marrer? Who are you?"

"We're the chaps this study belongs to, you podgy toad!" shouted Figgins.

"Well, so am I."

"What!"

"This study belongs to me, too."

"Wha-a-at! You're a School House rotter!"

"No, I'm not!" said Trimble emphatically. "I'm a New House chap. Not likely to go into the School House, if I can help it, after what I've learned about it! Mr. Ratcliff's spoken to the Head, and I'm going to belong to this House!"

"Well, you'd be a discredit to any House!" growled Kerr, with a disparaging look at the new junior's flabby form and podgy face. "Why the dickens couldn't you go into the School House? It's more suitable for a scrubby bounder like you!"

"Not likely!" said Trimble. "D'Arcy's chums are a bit too rotten for me to associate with, after what I've heard! Besides, this House suits me down to the ground. Mr. Ratcliff being so nice——"

"Nice!" ejaculated the three juniors, in astonishment.

"Yes; and allowing the fellows all the pastry they can eat——"

"Great Scott!"

"And being very easy with the lessons——"

"You silly ass! Ratty doesn't have anything to do with your lessons! He's Form-master of the Fifth! He's only your Housemaster!"

"Somebody's been stuffing him up to stick him in this House!" growled Kerr. "Lowther, of course! Lowther went down to the station for the toad!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Trimble, with a knowing look. "It isn't easy to stuff me up! I'm a keen card, I am!"

"Look here, you've scoffed our feed!" roared Fatty Wynn. "I'm going to strew you on the carpet in little bits—see?"

Trimble dodged round the table again as the cricket stump made a lick at him.

"Keep off!" he roared. "It wasn't your pie, anyway!"

"Wasn't mine? Why, you grubby rotter, I had it specially made by Mrs. Taggles to my order!" bellowed the indignant Fatty.

"I was told to make myself at home!" said Trimble, circling round the table as he spoke, with watchful eyes on Fatty. "That chap Lowther——"

"That School House rotter——"

"He told me Wynn would be delighted if I ate

all the pie, and I said I would. I don't know Wynn, but——"

"I'm Wynn!" yelled the Welsh junior.

"Well, if you're Wynn, what are you grouching about? I've finished up all the grub, haven't I?" said Trimble indignantly.

"You have, and I'm going to spiflicate you for it!"

"Yah! Keep off!" This time the stump very nearly reached Trimble. "Yow! Stop it! I say, Lowther told me—keep off!—told me you'd be pleased if I made a really good feed— Oh crumbs!"

Figgins grasped the infuriated Fatty and dragged him back. The flabby Trimble was out of breath.

"Chuck it, Fatty! The silly ass has been spoofed by that School House rotter; it's one of Lowther's beastly practical jokes!"

"That's all very well!" roared Fatty. "But what about my pie?"

"I've eaten it!" said Trimble, gasping. "It was a jolly good pie! I've finished the lot! I'm ready



"Do you mind if I have the afternoon off, sir?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Wilson, 41, West Side, Wandsworth Common, London, S.W. 18.

for tea, though, if you fellows are going to have tea!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Kerr. "You're beaten now, Fatty! You can't hold a candle to this chap!"

"Greedy beast!" spluttered Fatty Wynn. "He's fairly cleared out the whole study! Look here, Figgins, I'm going to slaughter him!"

"You're not!" said Figgins, laughing. "It's only a jape—the fat idiot was taken in! You clear off, young Trimble, while you're safe! You can buzz off to the School House, and tell Lowther we owe him a thick ear!"

"I'm staying here! This is my study!"

"It isn't your study!" roared Figgins. "Do you think we're going to have a fat sausage like you in here?"

"B-but Lowther told me——"

"Lowther was pulling your leg, you fat duffer!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Trimble, closing one eye. "It's not easy to pull my leg. I know you chaps are only joking. I can take a joke."

"You'll take something more than a joke if you don't clear out of the study!" said Kerr wrathfully.

"I give you one minute!" said Figgins. "If he isn't gone in a minute, Fatty, you can start on him with the cricket stump! I'll time him!"

"Right-ho!" said Fatty Wynn, with a blood-thirsty look.

He gripped the stump in a businesslike way.

Trimble began to be alarmed.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"I—I say, you know," he stammered, "which of you is Figgins?"

"I'm Figgins!" growled Figgy.

"Lowther said you were a splendid chap, and the best-tempered fellow in the world!"

"Much obliged to Lowther! Half a minute gone!" said Figgins, looking at his watch.

"He said Kerr was a ripping chap! I say, Kerr—"

"So I am!" grinned Kerr. "I'm going to let Fatty rip if you don't clear out of the study! You'll find it very ripping!"

"He said I should get on with Wynn if I always ate plenty and asked for more!" stammered Trimble. "He said the only thing I need be careful about was never to offer to pay my whack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't that minute up, Figgy?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

Figgins put his watch back into his pocket.

"Time's up!" he said. "Slaughter him!"

Fatty Wynn rushed forward, brandishing the stump.

Trimble gave him one terrified look, snatched the study door open, and fled.

His rapid footsteps died away down the passage.

Figgins chuckled.

"We shan't see that bounder in this study again!" he remarked. "Study No. 6 is welcome to a prize hog like that! And we'll scrag Lowther!"

"The feed's gone!" said Fatty Wynn dolefully.

"And the funds are out," said Kerr.

"We shall have to stick Reddy for tea. Come on."

"That lovely rabbit pie!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, come on! Reddy will stand us something!"

Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn marched along to Redfern's study.

Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence had come in, and fortunately had brought good supplies with them. They chuckled over the story of the disaster in Figgins' study; but they stood the unfortunate Co. a handsome tea, which was some comfort.

But a cloud remained on Fatty Wynn's expansive brow. He revelled in sardines, sausages and chips, in cake and jam and tarts. But he was still thinking of that gorgeous rabbit pie; and, like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was gone for ever, and would not be comforted.

CHAPTER 8.

Found at Last!

"GROOHH! Oh dear! Groooh!"

Trimble gasped and panted as he reached the bottom of the staircase in the New House.

Trimble was short of wind; and what little wind he did have was quite expended. And that whacking rabbit pie lay a little heavily. He had eaten enough for at least four hungry fellows and it was telling on him a bit.

A number of the New House juniors were going into the dining-room for tea, and some of them stopped to look at the new junior.

"Where did you drop from?" Clampe of the Shell asked him.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Groooh!"

"It's a blessed new kid," said Pratt of the Fourth disdainfully. "Looks a precious specimen, I must say."

"Had your tea, kid?" asked Robinson minor good-naturedly.

"I've had a snack!" said Trimble, brightening up at the mention of tea. "I've been badly treated by the fellows in my study. I refuse to share Figgins' study after this."

"Well, come in to tea," said Robinson.

"What's your Form?"

"Fourth!"

"Pretty sort of object to stick in our Form!" said Pratt.

"Oh, let him alone!" said the good-natured Robinson. "He can't help his face—can you, image?"

And Robinson took the new junior into the Hall, and sat him down to the tea-table.

The school tea was a frugal meal, and was seldom attended by any of the fellows who had funds enough to "feed" in their own studies. The fare was plain, but it was healthy and good; plenty of bread-and-butter, and a slice of cake. Some of the juniors took in extras on their own account. But Trimble was not supplied with any extras; and he stared at the bread-and-butter in disgust.

"Where's the pastry?" he asked Robinson.

Robinson stared.

"Pastry! We don't have pastry for tea. There's jam, but they've scoffed all that; we don't have much of that."

Trimble's jaw dropped.

"I—I've been taken in," he stuttered.

"You jolly well have, if anybody's told you we have pastry for tea," chuckled Digges of the Fourth.

"Don't the fellows here complain of having too many jam tarts and doughnuts and meringues?" asked Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House Fourth Formers chuckled at the idea. If their Housemaster, in a mood of reckless extravagance, had allowed them jam tarts, cakes, and doughnuts for tea they would certainly not have complained. The idea of Mr. Ratcliff doing anything of the sort tickled them immensely. The new kid, in spite of his self-satisfied air, was as green as grass.

"Silence at that table!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. The chuckling died away.

Trimble turned up his podgy little nose at the bread-and-butter, which he felt would not agree with the rabbit pie. He disposed of the cake, however, and looked round for more. But there was no more.

"Isn't there any more cake?" he whispered to Robinson.

"You've had a slice, haven't you?"

"What's a slice to me?" hissed Trimble.

"It's all you get, anyway."

"Oh crumbs!"

Trimble's eyes were being opened. He almost simmered with fury at the thought that he had been led to change into the New House before giving the School House a trial. Matters could not be worse there, at all events, he considered. Yet the description of D'Arcy's ferocious study-mates lingered in his mind. But, after all, Blake & Co. could scarcely be more ferocious than his own study-mates had proved to be.

He felt it would be difficult to get on with Figgins & Co.

After tea he came out with the juniors.

He was certainly not hungry; but he wanted to eat.

"Anywhere here a chap can get any grub?" he asked dismally.

"Tuckshop's not closed yet," said Robinson.

"You can get anything there that you pay for."

Trimble looked discouraged. He did not want to pay for anything.

"I'm hard up," he confessed. "I lent my last pound to that chap Lowther, who brought me from the station. I suppose you couldn't lend me half-a-crown?"

"You're right!" agreed Robinson. "I couldn't."

And he didn't.

Trimble wandered disconsolately out into the quadrangle. He had met with many disappointments. Figgins & Co. had not lived up to the golden colours in which they had been painted so enticingly by Monty Lowther. The fare in the New House had certainly not approached anywhere near his description. And Mr. Ratcliff had not shown himself good-tempered at tea-time. And Trimble had overheard a good many remarks, which convinced him that Ratty was a tartar of the worst tartaric kind. He found his way to the tuckshop by a sort of instinct. Dame Taggles came out of her parlour to serve him.

"I want some jam tarts," said Trimble, eyeing her. "I suppose you couldn't change a five-pound note, ma'am?"

"Yes, I can," said Mrs. Taggles.

Trimble coughed.

"Dear me, I've left it in my box!" he said.

"Never mind, I'll pay you when I get it out."

"I never allow credit," Mrs. Taggles said calmly.

"The fact is, ma'am, I'm a new chap here—"

"I can see that," remarked Dame Taggles.

"And—and a chap borrowed my money, and I can't find him to get it back," said Trimble;

"and I'm hungry, ma'am."

"I'm sorry."

"I suppose you can trust me for a couple of shillings, ma'am," said Trimble persuasively.

Dame Taggles looked at the podgy face and shifty eyes, and did not see anything there to trust. She shook her head.

"Floored again!" groaned Trimble, as Dame Taggles went back into her little parlour. "Oh, what luck! I wonder where that beast D'Arcy is?"

"Bai Jove! Twimble!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the tuckshop at that moment and came face to face with the new junior.

Trimble's face brightened.

"Gussy, old chap!" he exclaimed.

"I've been lookin' for you ewerywhere, deah boy. I wondahed where you had wandahed to," said Arthur Augustus. "Come on!"

"I'm hungry," said Trimble plaintively.

"Bai Jove! Didn't you have a wabbit pie?"

"Ye-es. That was only a snack."

"We've got a feed weady in No. 6," said Arthur Augustus kindly. "It's been weady more than an hour, and Blake, Hewwies, and Digby are waitin' for you. Come on! They've agreed to take you into our study, deah boy."

Trimble backed away.

"I can't share your study, D'Arcy."

"But you asked me in your lettah—"

"Yes, but I didn't know about Blake having

(Continued on next page.)

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

"500 Warplanes In Flight," we read. Wonder what they were afraid of?

"Have you heard the score of Mendelssohn's Wedding March?" asked Herries of Blake. "No, what was the score?" asked Blake innocently.

The perfect schoolboy MUST exist somewhere, states an authority. Poor chap, I expect the other fellows are giving him no end of a time.

Fishing is a sort of disease with some people, states a writer. But not always catching.

Crooke, our shady Shellfish, says a doctor has told him that it is harmful to smoke one cigarette on top of another. It is also very difficult to balance.

Fat men are slow to seize their opportunities, we read. Theirs is a "weighting" game.

Funny about secrets. Either a secret is too good to keep, or it is not worth keeping.

I hear that although the Government wants scrap metal for the armament speed-up, Mr. Selby is determined to hang on to his second-hand car.

"Nother: "Why didn't you send for me before?" asked the doctor, sent for when Taggles fell off a ladder. "Well, sir," replied Dame Taggles, "I thought we'd wait a while and give him a chance to get over it."

Story: "Look here, did you call me an ass?" Gore demanded of Figgins. "I did, but I qualified it," replied Figgins. "Qualified it? How?" demanded Gore. "I said you were an ass—all but the ears," replied Figgins sweetly.

Last shot: "What must a soldier do before all else?" asked the sergeant-major of the recruit. "His duty," answered the recruit. "Nonsense!" exclaimed the sergeant-major. "He must polish his buttons!"

I hear a new American play is called "The Ferry." It ought to get across all right.

STOP PRESS: It was so cold last week-end that many professional pick-pockets were seen putting their hands in their own pockets.

Skimpole tells me he has at last placed his treatise on the Potato, the Tomato, and the Artichoke, after 23 rejections. Yes, he has placed it in the fire!

All the best, chums!

knocked a new kid about so much that he was laid up in hospital for a week."

"What-a-at!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"I didn't know that Herries kept a savage bulldog in the study."

"Hewwies! Bai Jove!"

"And that Digby fights a chap every day regularly. I shouldn't feel safe in your study."

"Bai Jove! That awful wottah!" gasped D'Arcy. "Did Lowthah tell you all those wotten things, Twimble?"

"He put me on my guard."

"He was pullin' your leg, deah boy. It's all wight. They are thwee of the best. Hewwies keeps his bulldog in the kennels, and it's not allowed in the study. Dig nevah fights anybody. Blake is a wegulah Dutch uncle to the chaps. Lowthah is a humowous wottah, you know."

"Oh!" said Trimble.

"Come on, deah boy. It's all wight."

"Oh, I'll come!" said Trimble. "But—but— but I've changed into the New House."

"What!"

"Lowthah told me—"

"You uttah ass! I—I mean, you are wathah gween, you know. I shall give Lowthah a feahful thwashin' for this. Did he play any othah twicks on you?"

"Only borrowed all my money," said Trimble calmly.

Arthur Augustus looked very grave.

"Lowthah bowwowed your money, Twimble?"

"Yes, all I had about me. I'm stony. As you sent him to meet me, I understood that you would square up."

Arthur Augustus opened his pocket-book, extracted a currency note for one pound, and laid it in Trimble's podgy palm.

"There you are, deah boy! Pway say nothin' more about it. I am surprised at Lowthah; surprised and shocked. But pway say nothin' on the subject. Come with me."

And Trimble accompanied Arthur Augustus to the School House in great satisfaction; especially as Arthur Augustus assured him that he would be able to change back into his own House without the slightest difficulty.

CHAPTER 9.

A New Inmate in Study No. 6!

"**M**Y hat!"

"He's found him!"

"At last!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby uttered these exclamations as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched Trimble into Study No. 6. It was an hour and a half since Arthur Augustus had started out in search of his friend Trimble. He had never thought of looking in the New House; and Blake & Co. had felt satisfied that he wouldn't find Trimble.

But Arthur Augustus was a sticker. If he had not run upon Trimble in the tuckshop, he would have kept up the search till bed-time, if necessary.

"Here's Twimble, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "I've found him."

"So it seems!" grunted Blake.

"Twimble, this is Blake, and this is Hewwies, and this is Dig. I twust you will be gweat friends."

"You're welcome, Trimble," said Blake, with a manful effort. "We told Gussy we'd have you in the study, and we stick to it."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Make yourself at home!" groaned Digby.

"Oh, do!" mumbled Herries.

"Jolly glad to meet you fellows!" said Trimble affably. "I'd have been here before, only a rotten practical joker planted me in the other House. Did you say tea was ready, Gussy?"

Arthur Augustus winced a little. Somehow or other he did not like Trimble to call him Gussy. But he had taken the new junior under his wing, so he could scarcely raise an objection to his familiarity.

"Yaas, deah boy!" he said. "I'm sowwy I've kept you waitin' so long for tea, you know."

Jack Blake chuckled.



Monty Lowthah's hand dropped on Trimble's shoulder
"Rats!" exclaimed Lowthah. "You're coming"

"You haven't kept us waiting, my pippin!" he replied. "We had our tea long ago."

"Weally, Blake—"

"And it was jolly good!" said Digby heartily.

"But we've left yours, Gussy," said Herries.

"I twust you have left Twimble's, too," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"M-m-m! We forgot Trimble."

"I think you must have forgotten your man-nahs, too!" said Arthur Augustus, with great severity. "Howevah, pewwaps one of you will wun down to the tuckshop."

"I'll go," said Trimble at once. "I'm a dab at shopping. Give me the half-quid, and I'll get you full value for your money."

Arthur Augustus coughed, and Blake, Herries, and Digby stared. Arthur Augustus was lavish, especially in the entertainment of a guest. But he had certainly not intended to expend ten shillings upon tea.

However, he placed a ten-shilling note in Trimble's podgy hand, and the new junior quitted the study at once.

Arthur Augustus busied himself laying the cloth. Blake, Herries, and Digby were silent. They did not like Trimble, and they looked forward with dismay to having such a studymate in Study No. 6. But they would not run down Gussy's protegee to Gussy.

Trimble returned in about ten minutes with a bundle under his arm, and his face was beaming.



and he was swung back. "Let go!" shouted Trimble. "Let me to see D'Arcy about the money he owes you!"

He opened the bundle and displayed a choice collection of good things.

Blake glanced over them. Blake knew the tuckshop prices, and a glance was enough to show him that the goods had cost five or six shillings at the most.

"Thank you, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus. "It's vewy good of you to wire in in this way."

"Oh, all serene!" said Trimble. "I'm a useful chap, you know. I say, I'm jolly hungry."

Blake looked rather oddly at Trimble as the latter sat down to tea. Trimble made no sign of handing Arthur Augustus his change.

Perhaps he had a bad memory where cash was concerned.

"Did these things come to ten bob?" asked Blake at last.

"Ten-and-twopence," said Trimble calmly. "I paid the twopence myself."

"Oh!" said Blake.

The new boy wired into the provisions. Blake & Co. had seen Fatty Wynn's performances in that line, but Baggy Trimble's performance was a surprise to them. They watched him as if fascinated.

Arthur Augustus was hungry, too; his tea was very late, owing to the lengthy search for Trimble. But he talked as he ate.

Trimble was too busy to talk.

"Aftah tea I've got to go and see the Housemaster," he remarked. "Would you believe it, deah boys, that wottah Lowthah was stuffin' Twimble up with yarns about this study, and persuaded him to change into the New House."

"Ahem!"

"H'm!" murmured Herries.

Digby looked at the ceiling and said nothing.

"Of course, he can change back," said D'Arcy. "I shall see Mr. Wailton about it at once. Then I want you fellows to come with me to back me up. I am goin' to give Lowthah a fealful thwashin'!"

"Ahem!"

When tea was over—which was not till Trimble had cleared the table—Arthur Augustus marched him away to Mr. Railton's study. It was necessary to explain to the Housemaster. Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another when they were gone.

"Well, what do you think of him?" said Blake, with a deep breath.

"Rotter!" said Digby.

"He's swindled Gussy over that grub."

"Anybody but Gussy would have seen that!" growled Herries.

"Lowther's a silly ass!" said Blake. "I thought he had planted the beast in the New House. Now we've got to stand him!"

"We shall have to muzzle Gussy!" snorted Digby. "We can't let him go for Lowther when we were in the game."

"Ha, ha, ha! Hardly!"

Mr. Railton looked a little surprised when Arthur Augustus marched into his study with Trimble. He was still more surprised when he heard Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's explanation and request.

"This is very unfortunate," said Mr. Railton. "Mr. Ratcliff has mentioned to the Head that Trimble desires to board in the New House, and the Head has consented and informed me of the matter. I quite understand your wish to have your friend with you, D'Arcy, but I fear it is too late."

"But, sir, it was a wotten pwaactical joke!" said Arthur Augustus. "Twimble is wathah gween, sir, and he was stuffed up—ahem!—I mean, he was made to believe that the chaps in my study were simply dweadfully fewocious."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Quite so, D'Arcy; but"—the Housemaster frowned—"I understand that Trimble's father wished him to be with Mr. Ratcliff."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Trimble at once. "My father sent me here to go into the School House, sir."

"But I understand that Mr. Trimble specially desired you to be under Mr. Ratcliff's charge, but was unaware of which House Mr. Ratcliff was master."

"Not at all, sir."

"Mr. Ratcliff spoke to Dr. Holmes to that effect, Trimble," said Mr. Railton somewhat sternly. "He based his statement upon what you had told him. Otherwise you would certainly not have been assigned to the New House."

"Mr. Ratcliff must have misunderstood me, sir," said Trimble. "What I really meant to say was that my father specially desired me to be with Mr. Railton."

"You must have expressed yourself very unfortunately, Trimble," said the Housemaster, with a keen look at the new junior's podgy face.

"I'm sorry, sir, but that's what I meant. I'm afraid my father would be annoyed if I were put into the New House after he specially sent me to the School House."

"The transfer was subject to the approval of your father, Trimble, after communication with him by the Head," said Mr. Railton. "You are now under Mr. Ratcliff's authority, and I cannot give you leave to remain in this House. You had better return to the New House for to-night, and I will see what can be done. Dr. Holmes will communicate with your father, and his decision will settle the matter."

"Vewy well, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

And he led his protegee away.

"You'll have to go into the New House to-night, deah boy," he said in the passage. "But it will be all wight to-morrow. And I am goin' to give that boundah Lowthah a feaful thwashin'!"

Trimble grunted discontentedly. But there was no help for it, and he had to return to the New House. And when Arthur Augustus returned to Study No. 6 alone, and announced that his friend Trimble wasn't coming there that evening, Blake & Co. heard the news with great equanimity.

"We'll try to get through one evening without him somehow," said Jack Blake, with heroic fortitude.

"Wats! And now, deah boys, come with me!"

"What for?"

"I am goin' to thwash Lowthah, and I want you to back me up."

"Look here—"

"Wubbish! Come on!"

"We've got our prep to do."

"Pwep can wait till latah, Hewwies. I twust you are goin' to back me up."

"Suppose you let the matter drop and let bygones be bygones?" suggested Digby. "To err is human, you know, and to forgive is divine."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Let's leave Lowthah to his conscience," suggested Blake.

"I weally do not believe that he has got one," said D'Arcy. "He is a pwaactical jokin' beast! Are you goin' to back me up?"

"Look here, don't play the giddy ox!" said Blake. "We were in favour of keeping that fat rat out of the study. Now do you understand?"

Arthur Augustus drew himself to his full height, and his eyeglass glittered at his chums.

"Am I to undahstand, Blake, that you fellows were parties to this wotten twick on my fwiend Trimble?"

"We knew all about it, fathead, and I am only sorry that that idiot Lowther mucked it up!" said Blake unrepentantly. "I thought he'd got the boulder planted on Figgins & Co. It would have served those New House boulders right!"

"I'm shocked at you, Blake."

"Go hon!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,553.

"I am disgusted with you, Dig!"

"You don't say so!"

"I wegard you as a wottah, Hewwies!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"So before you start thrashing Lowther you'd better thrash this study," grinned Blake. "And before you do that you'd better make all the necessary arrangements about your funeral!"

"I wegard your conduct as wewpwehensible, Blake!"

"Good! Now let's get on with the prep."

"I doubt whethah I can continue to share your study aftah such a beastly twick! I have a jolly good mind to ask Kewwuish to let me into Study No. 5 with my fwiend Trimble."

"I can guess what Kewwuish would say, after he has seen Trimble!" chuckled Blake.

"You appeah to have taken a gwoundless dislike to my fwiend."

"Bow-wow!"

"This is not what I expected fwom my own pals!" said Arthur Augustus, more in sorrow than in anger.

Blake groaned dismally.

"Oh, don't put on that record, Gussy! Look here, we'll swallow Trimble whole. We'll put up with him as long as you do. There!"

"Vewy well, Blake, we will let it go at that."

And so it was let go at that. And Study No. 6 settled down at last to their preparation.

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy Gets the Goal!

TRIMBLE was installed in the School House on the following day.

He was very glad to get there.

The matter had been satisfactorily arranged, though somehow or other Mr. Ratcliff did not seem satisfied. Mr. Ratcliff was offended. Trimble had pulled the Housemaster's leg for his own purpose, and Mr. Ratcliff had been flattered and had been quite prepared to be kind to Trimble. When he discovered that it was a mistake, and that it was Mr. Railton with whom Trimble senior was so keenly desirous to place his son, Mr. Ratcliff was naturally ratty.

Trimble's brief sojourn in the New House, therefore, had not been pleasant. Mr. Ratcliff had kept a ratty eye on him. He had caned him for taking pastry into the dormitory overnight, he had caned him for being late down in the morning, he had caned him for "guzzling" at breakfast, and he had caned him yet again for appearing in a soiled collar. But for Trimble's fortunate transfer into the School House that day the canings would undoubtedly have gone on.

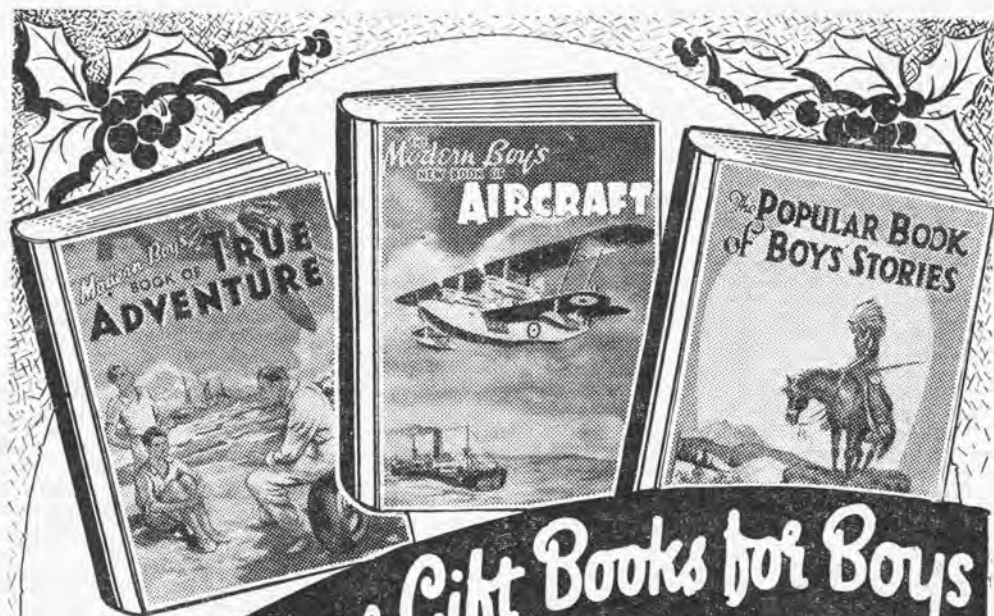
Arthur Augustus listened to his friend's tale of woe with great sympathy, and agreed that Ratty was a beast. As a matter of fact, Trimble had more than deserved his lickings, for he had certainly deceived Mr. Ratcliff in the first place, and his subsequent change of mind had been a slight to that gentleman. But the simple-minded Gussy fully believed Trimble's statement that it had been a "mistake."

Blake & Co. kept their word with regard to Trimble. They made him welcome in the study and were quite civil. They had agreed to stand him as long as Gussy did.

They wondered how long that would be.

Blake, Herries, and Dig had set the new fellow down as a boulder and a worm, as the veriest "outside edge," in fact.

(Continued on page 22.)



Grand Xmas Gift Books for Boys

The POPULAR BOOK of BOYS' STORIES

A volume of humorous and thrilling adventure stories. Hundred and ninety pages of entertainment; stories by famous authors of boys' literature. **2/6**

Modern Boy's Book of TRUE ADVENTURE

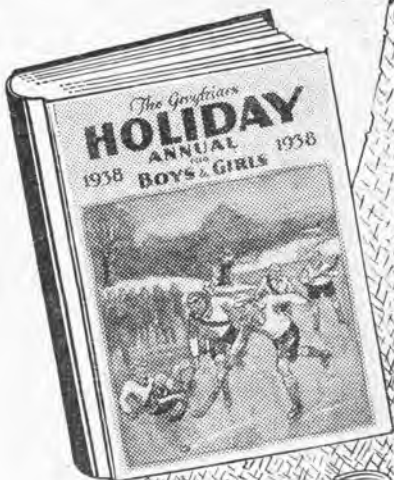
A fascinating new book of Air, Land, and Sea thrills which not only grip but are TRUE. Two Colour Plates and many illustrations by favourite artists. 192 large pages. **5/-**

Modern Boy's New Book of AIRCRAFT

A best-seller specially revised. Deals with all that is most interesting concerning flying and aircraft. Colour Plate and other pictures. **6/-**

HOLIDAY ANNUAL 5/-

The famous school-story annual, featuring Billy Bunter, Tom Merry & Co. and other schoolboy characters. Four fine Colour Plates.



Obtainable from all Newsagents and Booksellers.

Choose books for your Christmas presents this year, and if you make your selection from these famous Annuals you will be certain of hours and hours of entertainment—long after ordinary gifts have lost their interest. All these books are strongly bound in coloured covers and packed with splendid features. See them at the Newsagents, today!

But, on closer acquaintance, they came round to the opinion that, although Trimble was undoubtedly a good deal of a rogue, he was still more of a duffer.

His untruthfulness was apparent to anyone; but, on reflection and observation, Blake & Co. decided that Trimble was hardly conscious of himself, and that he rattled out "whoppers" without quite realising that they were whoppers. He would say the first thing that came into his head, without stopping to consider whether it bore any relation to the facts or not.

A fellow of that kind was new to them. There were liars in the circle of their acquaintance, like Mellish of the Fourth, and Pigott of the Third. But a fellow whose notions of the difference between truth and falsehood were hazy, was quite a new phenomenon. They discovered that Trimble rather prided himself on his exact truthfulness, and considered himself admirable in that respect. He considered himself admirable in very many respects. And Study No. 6 couldn't see anything admirable in him at all.

Blake, with the idea of making the best of him, and perhaps of improving him a little later, offered to take him down to the footer. A fat and weedy slacker like Trimble would certainly have been improved by a little footer.

Trimble had told many stories in the study by that time of his football prowess. Blake found these stories hard to believe, looking at Trimble. But he was more than willing to give Trimble a chance. It was a stigma on Study No. 6 if one of its inmates was no footballer. So, after Trimble had been a few days at St. Jim's, Jack Blake tackled him on the subject.

"You haven't shown up at the footer yet, Trimble," he said, at tea in the study. The Terrible Three had come into tea that evening, and they were very civil to Trimble, on Gussy's account.

They did not like him personally—that would have been difficult. And Lowther was somewhat exasperated with him, owing to the failure of his scheme for planting the fellow in the New House.

It had been a first-class scheme, and it had worked out well, and come very near to succeeding. But Trimble had slipped out of the net, as it were. Arthur Augustus was a little stiff with Lowther. The fearful thrashing had not been administered, certainly; but Arthur Augustus showed no gratitude whatever for the trouble Lowther had taken to keep out the outsider.

Trimble looked up from the pork pie on his plate.

"Footer?" he said. "Yes, I've been thinking about it. I suppose I shall be put in the junior team?"

"Not till we've seen what you can do, at all events," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Oh, that's all right! I've been watching some of the play here, and it's hardly up to my standard."

"Oh, isn't it?" said Tom, a little nettled.

"Hardly," said Trimble, with his mouth full. "At home I played, you know, with the accent on the 'play.' At Trimble Hall I used to make up a team among the servants, and play village teams."

"Trimble Hall?" repeated Blake.

"Yes; my home, you know. I'd like you fellows to come down there next vac," said

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

Trimble calmly. "It would interest you specially, Gussy—the old Norman keep, and all that, built by Sir Rufus de Trimble, in the reign of King Philip."

"King which?" yelled Blake.

"I—I mean King Richard."

"Which Richard?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, Richard the Third!"

"Did they build Norman keeps in the reign of Richard the Third?" asked Blake, with a grin.

"I should have said Richard the First," said Trimble. "The chap who let the cakes burn, you know, and never smiled again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"I don't see where the chortle comes in," said Trimble. "Pass the cake, Gussy, will you?"

"Here you are, deah boy!"

Trimble transferred the cake from the dish to his own plate, a proceeding that was observed with some astonishment by the tea party. The cake had been intended for eight.

"Well, about the footer!" gasped Blake.

"Practice is compulsory here, and you'll have Kildare down on you if you don't turn up. It's still light enough for some practice. Suppose you come down after tea? If you're a jolly good footballer, you'll have a chance in the eleven."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry. "If you're better than a playing member, you'll get a place for the matches."

"May as well take it as settled, then," said Trimble. "I generally play centre-forward."

"Well, that's my place in the eleven," said Tom.

"But I suppose you'd stand out to make room for a better man?" asked Trimble. "A football skipper ought to think of the good of the team as a whole."

"I think I know the duty of a footer captain," said Tom, a little tartly. "If you're a better centre-forward than I am, you'll go in."

"Done!"

"Not quite done yet," grinned Tom Merry. "You've got to show it, you know."

"Oh, that's nothing! I'll come down after tea."

After tea the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 marched Trimble down to Little Side. They were curious to see what Trimble could do. A good many fellows who had heard Trimble's football talk followed, equally curious. Figgins & Co. were on the ground, and Tom called to Fatty Wynn.

"Get into goal, Fatty, old man, and see if you can stop Trimble's shots. We've brought a new Drake to spring on you."

Fatty Wynn sniffed.

"If I can't stop anything that fat slacker sends in, you can use my head for a footer!" he said.

"Well, I like that," ejaculated Trimble. "I'm not so jolly fat as you, anyway, you bunny rabbit."

Fatty Wynn looked hostile; he had not forgotten the rabbit pie. But Figgins and Kerr hustled him into goal.

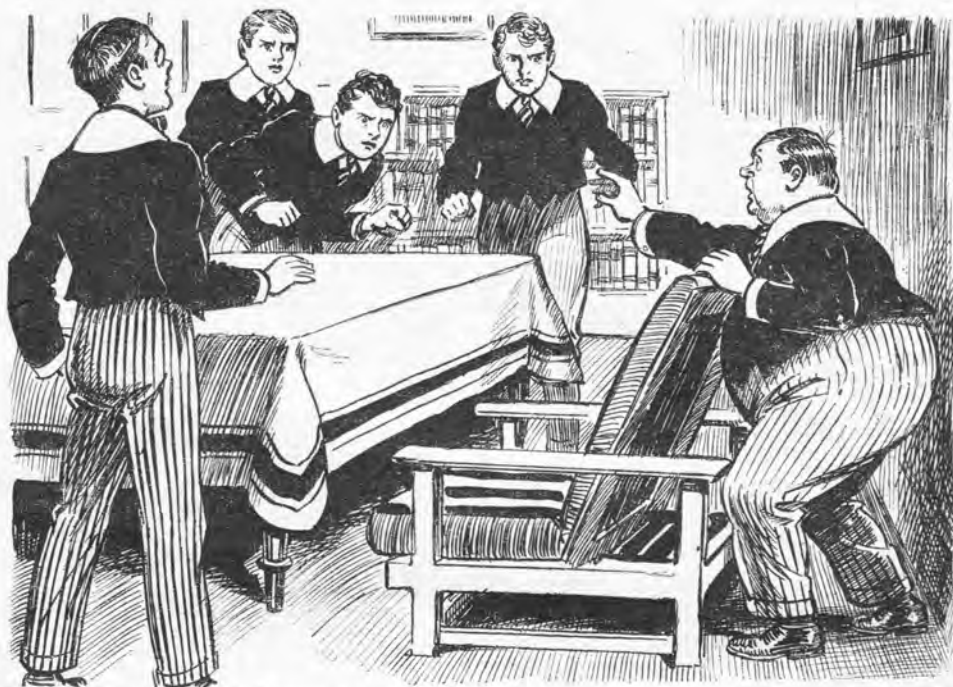
"Don't let him beat you, Fatty," said Figgins.

"Stick up for the New House, you know."

"Beat me—that fat duffer!" grunted Fatty Wynn. "Rot!"

Blake slung the ball down at Trimble's feet.

"There you are," he said. "Dribble it down to goal, and beat Fatty."



"So I'm down on the list of spongers, as well as this study!" roared Lowther, making a dash round the table. Trimble dodged behind the armchair. "Yow-ow! Keep him off!"

"That's soon done," said Trimble confidently. Trimble's manner was so full of confidence, not to say swank, that some of the juniors wondered whether they had misjudged him, and whether he was really a good footballer, in spite of appearances.

They soon discovered.

Trimble started dribbling the ball down the field. His ideas of dribbling a ball seemed somewhat vague; his object really seemed to be to tie his feet together in a knot. Chuckles followed him as he careered away, and there was a roar of laughter as he trod on the ball, and sat down with a bump.

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"They must have been ripping players at Trimble Hall," chuckled Blake.

"They must! Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble picked himself up, gasping for breath.

"We didn't play the dribbling game, really," he stuttered.

"You didn't, that's a fact," grinned Digby. "Did you play any game at all?"

"You wait till you've seen me shoot at goal!" snorted Trimble.

"Well, we're waiting."

Trimble trundled the ball down to goal, without essaying any more dribbling. He calmly placed it in the most favourable position for a shot, Fatty Wynn eyeing him from between the posts. The chums of the School House were on the field, standing round to watch that ripping

shot when it came off. If Trimble could kick at all, certainly he ought to have scored.

He kicked.

Fatty Wynn, in goal, was looking out. But it was quite unnecessary to look out. The footer never came anywhere near the goal. There was a sudden roar from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy:

"Gwoooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The footer had shot off at the wrong angle, and it had bumped fair and square upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic features. The swell of St. Jim's staggered back.

"Oh cwumbs! Oh deah! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors.

Trimble blinked round.

"Where's that ball? Is it in the goal?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!" yelled Arthur Augustus, dabbing furiously at his muddy face. "You cwass duffah! Look what you've done!"

"My only aunt! Did it hit you?" ejaculated Trimble, in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cwass ass!"

"You shouldn't have got in the way!" said Trimble wrathfully. "How can a chap shoot for goal if you stick your head in the way?"

"Gussy was yards off!" yelled Blake. "You silly ass, if Gussy hadn't been in the way, the footer would have gone into touch!"

"Gwoogh! Oh deah! I am goin' to get a wash!"

"You need one!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Gussy, old man, I congratulate you—your pal is a topping footballer!"

"Oh wats! Gwoogh!"

"Here, where are you going?" called out Trimble, as Tom Merry & Co. moved off, laughing. "Aren't you going to see what I can do?"

"We've seen what you can do! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If that means that you're not going to make me centre-forward in the eleven, Tom Merry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the School House walked away almost in hysterics. They had seen enough of Trimble's prowess as a footballer, and they were not inclined to risk catching his next shot at goal. If there was one thing that was absolutely certain, it was that Baggy Trimble would not take Tom Merry's place as centre-forward in the junior eleven.

CHAPTER 11.

Trimble the Victim!

"**A** NYTHIN' the mattah, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus asked that question, a few days later, as he came into Study No. 6.

Trimble of the Fourth was there, and he was looking very thoughtful, and indeed, dolorous.

"Hard up," said Trimble.

"Wotten!" said D'Arcy.

"Stony, in fact. We don't get enough grub here, either!" said Trimble discontentedly.

"I have always regarded the grub as bein' wathah good, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "But you make it up at the tuckshop, don't you? You spend a gweat deal of money there."

"I can't make it up there when I'm stony," said Trimble.

"But you have lots of money," said Arthur Augustus, in surprise. "You have such a whacking allowance—"

Trimble coughed.

Arthur Augustus had never seen Trimble's whacking allowance; he had taken Trimble's word about that.

"The fact is, I'm a generous chap," said Trimble—"too generous, in fact, and I get taken advantage of. I'm always lending fellows money, and when I want some, I find I have nothing left!"

"That's vewy hard cheese!"

"Of course, you won't mention it to Blake, Gussy, but he had my last ten bob," said Trimble. "He didn't want me to mention it to you, and I wouldn't have, only I thought you might lend it to me till he can settle."

"Weally, Twimble, I wish you had not mentioned it, if Blake asked you not to do so."

"But I'm stony!" said Trimble plaintively. "I don't mind lending Blake money, but it's hard on me to be left stranded!"

"Yaas; but it's vewy odd. Blake must have forgotten it. He had a wemittance to-day, and he always settles up vewy promptly. Pewwaps you had bettah wemind him!"

"Oh, no; not at all!"

"I will wefer to the mattah, if you like."

"Don't! Blake didn't wish it to be mentioned. If he doesn't pay up, I can afford to lose the money; but just now, as it happens—"

"Blake will certainly settle up, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus, a little stiffly. "I wegard any doubt on the subject as a vexfection on my fwend."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

Howevah, if you are stony, I can let you have a little loan."

"Thanks awfully!" said Trimble, as his fat fingers closed on the ten-shilling note Arthur Augustus extended to him. "I'll settle this when—when Blake squares."

"Wight-ho!"

And Trimble departed at once for the tuckshop. Trimble spent most of his leisure time, and all his money, in the tuckshop. He was one of Dame Taggles' best customers, when he was in funds. His expenditure at the tuckshop on his own account was perhaps the reason why he never stood his "whack" in the study feed. He took the lion's share of what was going, but never offered a cash contribution towards the same.

Study No. 6 did not mention the matter to him; they were not disposed to haggle with the greedy bouncer.

Arthur Augustus, if he thought about it at all, attributed it to mere thoughtlessness. Blake, Herries, and Digby were growing a little restive. But they kept to the compact—to stand Trimble as long as the Honourable Arthur Augustus stood him.

Trimble, according to his own account, had an ample allowance from a pater simply rolling in "oof." But because of his weakness for lending money to other fellows, he was generally hard-up. That was how he put it, at all events.

Blake, Herries, and Digby did not believe in the ample allowance, or in the weakness for lending money. But Arthur Augustus did not think of doubting.

Arthur Augustus was a little troubled in his mind now. Blake had had a handsome remittance that day from Yorkshire, and D'Arcy wished that he hadn't forgotten to settle up with Trimble. Then there was a pound Lowther had borrowed of Trimble the day he came to St. Jim's—that hadn't been settled either.

Lowther had received his allowance since then, and certainly could have settled if he had wished. It really looked as if a thoughtless and generous fellow was being victimised.

"Hallo, Gussy! Wherefore that worried brow?" asked Blake, coming into the study with a bundle. "Pop round and help, old chap! A feast of the gods to-day. We're in funds again!"

"You had a wathah good wemittance, Blake?"

"A whole quid!" said Blake.

"I twust you do not mind my givin' you a word of advice, Blake?" said Arthur Augustus, in the manner of an elderly uncle, which he sometimes adopted towards his studymates.

"Not a bit," said Blake. "Not if you rake up the fire at the same time."

"I mean, before you expend your wemittance wecklessly, Blake, it would be a good ideah to settle up any little accounts you owe wound about!"

Blake stared.

"What are you driving at, Gussy? I've settled up the half-crown I owed Kerruish, and the bob Reilly lent me. I never forget things like that."

"All sewene, deah boy!"

"I don't think I owe anybody anything else," said Blake, puzzled.

"Pewwaps you have forgotten?" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I might have, of course, though I don't usually forget anything of that kind. But if I forgot, I expect the fellow would remind me fast enough."

"He might be too delicate to wemind you, Blake."

"What rot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here, Gussy," said Blake, greatly astonished, "if I owe you anything, and I've forgotten it, you've got a tongue in your silly head, and you can tell me, I suppose."

"You do not owe me anythin', deah boy."

"Then what are you burbling about?"

"I wufuse to have my wemarks chawactewised as burblin'."

"Oh, bow-wow! Lend a hand with the tea, and don't talk out of the back of your neck!" said Blake, a little gruffly. "Dig and Herries will be in a minute, and Talbot and Gore are coming."

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

And the subject was dropped, and it was not revived. Dig and Herries came in, bringing Talbot and Gore of the Shell with them.

Trimble came in after them. There was a fat and shiny look on Trimble's face, which indicated that he had done exceedingly well at the tuckshop. But he piled into tea with an appetite that would have put Fatty Wynn in the shade. Even Arthur Augustus could not be blind to the fact that Trimble was overeating himself in a way that was not pleasant to look upon.

Talbot and Gore saw his performance with wonder.

When the Shell fellows left the study, Blake, Herries, and Digby went with them. Trimble's company made Study No. 6 much less comfortable than of old, and the three chums spent more time in the other fellows' studies than they had been used to.

Trimble had sat down in the armchair. There was only one armchair in the study, and Trimble always occupied it when he was there.

Arthur Augustus hesitated. He did not wish to appear to be deserting his protegee. It was noblesse oblige again.

Trimble glanced at the door. It was shut.

"You won't mind my mentioning it, Gussy—" he began.

"Go ahead, deah boy!"

"I'm rather short of tin. I want to send some money to an old pal who is down on his luck. Of course, I could wait till Tom Merry paid up the pound I lent him yesterday—"

"Has Tom Mewwy been bowwowin' money of you, Twimble?"

"Oh, it was only a pound!" said Trimble airily. "I don't mind a bit. But I do want to send off that pound as soon as I can to my pal. Of course, Tom Merry's certain to square. I think—"

"Quite certain, Twimble."

"Then perhaps you wouldn't mind lending me the pound till he does?"

There was a pause.

Arthur Augustus had a pound and a few coppers left out of his last fiver, but he could not refuse. Trimble's object was a noble one, and then, Tom Merry was quite certain to pay anything he owed at the very earliest opportunity.

Arthur Augustus opened his pocket-book and a pound note was passed over to Trimble.

"Thanks very much, Gussy!"

"Don't mensh, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus left the study, and Trimble winked at the ceiling, and then closed his eyes and slept. He was snoring when D'Arcy came to tell him it was bed-time.

CHAPTER 12.

Once Too Often!

TOM MERRY & CO. kept an amused eye on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy day by day.

They could not help wondering how long he would be able to stand the strain of Baggy Trimble's friendship.

That the new junior was an out-and-out bounder was patent to all other eyes, and it seemed that even Arthur Augustus' aristocratic eyes could not remain sealed for ever.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were growing very restive.

Trimble worried them.

The mere sight of his fat, self-satisfied, smirking face in the study drove them out of Study No. 6 when they were not compelled to remain there.

They simply could not stand him. But they had given their word, and Study No. 6's word was its bond. They had agreed to stand Trimble as long as Gussy did. A compact was a compact, and had to be kept.

But how long was the Honourable Arthur Augustus going on if they gave him his head?

They knew that Trimble must be making him writhe inwardly. They knew it jarred upon his nerves when Trimble called him "Gussy," and that it made him shudder when Trimble linked arms with him.

Arthur Augustus' manners and customs were unimpeachable, but his feelings he could not help.

But Gussy was still standing the strain.

"And the worst of it is," growled Blake, to his equally incensed chums, "the fat bounder hasn't any claim on Gussy. Only met him twice before he came here, and that was by chance—some crowd at a seaside place."

"What does Gussy stand it for?" grunted Herries.

Blake groaned.

"Noblesse oblige. Gussy would be polite to a convict from Dartmoor. The fat rotter has fastened on to him, and Gussy doesn't like to rebuff him."

"It wouldn't hurt his feelings," said Dig. "He hasn't got any."

"Gussy thinks it would, and he's going on tolerating him, and making the best of him; and we've got to do the same. Why doesn't the fat brute fall ill? He eats enough to make a camel ill. Why can't he have an attack of apoplexy?"

"No such luck!"

"Hallo, here he is!"

Trimble came smiling into the study. The three juniors were silent, feeling very uncomfortable. They had been talking about Trimble. True, they would have been glad to repeat in his presence what they had said in his absence, but their pledge to Gussy forbade that.

Trimble nodded to them very genially.

"I wanted to see you without Gussy being here," he said mysteriously. "He's just gone to see Talbot. Of course, you'll keep it dark?"

"I don't catch on," said Blake gruffly. "We're not going to keep dark anything you've got to say about our pal, if that's what you mean."

"I mean, it's a question of saving his feelings," said Trimble. "You see, it's like this. I've lent Gussy five bob."

"Well?"

"He's going to return it on Saturday, but I happen to be short of money. I shouldn't like

Gussy to think I mentioned it," said Trimble. "I've spoken of it in confidence."

"Blow your confidence!" growled Blake. "What do you want to speak of it at all for, then?"

"Well, it's left me stony, you see. I thought perhaps you fellows might see me through till Gussy gets a remittance. I couldn't refuse him, as he's been such a good pal."

"Well, I'm glad you can see that, at all events," said Blake. "If you've lent Gussy five bob and you want it, here it is."

"Thanks! I'll settle it when Gussy squares."

"Oh, all right!"

Trimble quitted the study at once, and from the window Blake observed him making a direct line for Dame Taggles' shop.

Blake turned from the window, with a thoughtful frown.

"Blessed if I'd have thought Gussy would have borrowed of that chap!" he said. "He can't like the beast!"

Herries gave a snort. Digby grunted. They were fed-up with Trimble, and they were growing very impatient with Arthur Augustus for not being fed-up with him, too.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were in the school shop when Trimble arrived there. They did not trouble to nod to him. They were not under the same obligation as Study No. 6, and did not feel called upon to waste civility upon him. But Trimble was not thin-skinned. He greeted them genially.

"I saw you at footer to-day," he said. "I could have given you some tips about passing the ball, Merry."

"Not about dribbling it?" grinned the captain of the Shell.

.....



Everyone in Texas knows the famous boy outlaw, the Rio Kid. There is a price upon his head, and for some time he has been hiding. But he returns to the danger zone—risking life and liberty in this stirring long yarn!

Ask for No. 601 of

BOYS' FRIEND Library

Of all Newsagents and Bookstalls 4d

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"The way you kicked, Lowther, was pretty rotten!"

"Was it?" said Monty Lowther sulphurously.

"Yes, rather—to a chap accustomed to really good play, I mean! You don't mind my mentioning it?" said Trimble affably. "It's a fault of mine that I'm very candid. A dozen tarts, please, Mrs. Taggles, and two ginger-pops, and some doughnuts!"

Tom Merry & Co. were discussing tarts. Their couple each lasted them the time it took Trimble to dispose of Blake's five shillings. But Trimble was not satisfied. Like Alexander, he sighed for fresh worlds to conquer.

"I'll have some more tarts, Mrs. Taggles!"

"You will make yourself ill, Master Trimble!" said Dame Taggles, in alarm. "You have eaten far too much!"

"I suppose that's my own business!" growled Trimble. "You hand me six tarts, ma'am, please! I'll settle for them when I change my five-pound note."

"I'll change a banknote for you, Master Trimble!"

"Ahem! It—it's in my desk——"

"I will wait while you fetch it, Master Trimble," said Dame Taggles calmly.

Trimble grunted, and turned away from the counter, and Dame Taggles smiled grimly, and went back into her parlour.

"It's jolly hard lines, you chaps!" said Trimble discontentedly. "I suppose you haven't any tin you don't want?"

"None that we don't want, certainly," said Tom Merry.

"It's hard lines on me. I have a whacking allowance, but I never get much of it for myself since I've been in Study No. 6. Those fellows are always borrowing my money—especially Gussy. Look here, I suppose you could lend me half-a-crown, Merry, till Gussy squares up?"

"I lend money only to my friends," said Tom coolly.

"Well, I'm your friend, aren't I?" said Trimble, unabashed. "I'm Gussy's best pal, and Gussy's your pal, so it comes to the same thing. If you can't make me a small loan, I shall have to dun Gussy for what he owes me, that's all!"

Tom Merry's hand went into his pocket at that. He would willingly have sacrificed his last half-crown—and it was his last—to save Arthur Augustus from being dunned by that unspeakable bounder.

Monty Lowther laid a hand on his arm.

"Chuck it!" he said. "We'll go into this! Trimble, did you say that Gussy owes you money?"

"Certainly!"

"How much?"

"Pounds and pounds! Blessed if I remember exactly how much!"

"And the other chaps in Study No. 6 have been borrowing your tin?"

"Yes; they're always sponging on me, one or another of them!" said Trimble cheerfully.

"Well," said Monty Lowther deliberately, "I don't believe a word of it!"

"Monty!" murmured Tom.

"Don't 'Monty' me! The fat cad is lying!"

"If you doubt my word, Lowther——" began Trimble fiercely.

"Well, I do!"

Lowther pushed back his cuffs, prepared for Trimble's deeds to suit themselves to his looks. But they didn't.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging views on matters of mutual interest. Readers wishing to reply to notices published here must write to the Pen Pals direct. Notices for publication should be accompanied by the coupon on this page, and posted to The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Billy Fairbairn, Solis 352, Temperley, F.C. Sud, **Argentina**; any age; not England; collect stamps only; will send stamps, match brands, newspapers.

Kevin Rook, 117, MacKinnon Parade, Lower North Adelaide, South Australia, **Australia**; any country, especially Jamaica; stamps.

James Dawson, 24, Dene Terrace, Walbottle, Newburn-on-Tyne, **Northumberland**; age 16-18; New Zealand, South Africa, Gold Coast, or Canada; stamps, especially Coronation issues.

Miss Freda Ross, 18, Relugas Road, Newington, **Edinburgh 9**; companion papers; girl correspondents.

Miss Grace Young, 8, Lowman Road, Holloway, **London, N.7**; girl correspondents.

Miss G. Jones, "Pendennis," Ewell Road, Tolworth, **Surrey**; age 15-17; American girl correspondent in U.S.A. or Canada; horses and lions; music, tennis, and films.

Stanley Mann, 2nd Avenue, Malvern, Natal, **South Africa**; all over world; age 14-20; stamps, films, sports, photo collecting.

Eileen Wright, 30, Gardiner Street, Padov, **Capetown, South Africa**; girl correspondents; age 15; especially America.

Clarence Boonzaier, 5, Oxford Street, Woodstock, **Capetown, South Africa**; sports, music, swimming, reading and indoor games.

R. J. Plimley, 124, Egerton Road South, Charlton-cum-Hardy, **Manchester**; age 16; stamps, photography.

William Foggion, 39, Bondicar Terrace, Blyth, **Northumberland**; Post Office Messengers all over world.

D. Libby, 6, Hatherton Road, Shanklin, **Isle of Wight**; stamp collecting; overseas.

Allan Russell, Heaslop Terrace, Annerley, Brisbane, **Queensland, Australia**; age 16-18; newspapers, view cards. K. Shume, 19, Herries Street, Toowomba, **Queensland, Australia**; age 12-14; football, cricket, tennis, stamps; New Guinea, Nova Scotia, India, South Africa.

Edmund Foong, 17, Bishopsgate Street, Kuching, **Sarawak**; age 16-21; stamps, snaps, postcards, views, and sports; all parts of world.

J. Heaton, 400a, Parliament Street, Toronto, **Ontario, Canada**; age 13-14; European situation; France, New Zealand.

A. Dunlellman, 1055, Bernard Avenue, Outremont, **Quebec, Canada**; age 14-18; stamps and coins.

Ng. E. Telk, 50, Limbong Kapal, Alor Star, Kedah, **British Malaya**; anywhere; stamps, postcards, coins, scenery, views, and stuffed animals.

Norman Talbot Abrahamse, 4, Stanley Road, Claremont, **Capetown, South Africa**; age 16 and upwards; England, especially Somersetshire and Derbyshire; cricket, piano synecopation.

Robert Pollard, 35, Gerard Avenue, Canley, **Coventry, Warwickshire**; age 12-16; any part of the world; stamps, sports, literature.

Adi R. Billimoria, Parsi High School, Panchgani, via Poona, **India**; age 17-20; films, sports, music.

T. C. Lee, 41p, Jalan Kembangan, off Changi Road, **Singapore**; age 17-20; stamps, cricket, swimming.

Cecil J. C. Hawker, 30, Norfolk Road, Erdington, **Birmingham**; pen pals; age 22 up.

Miss Doris Daires, 45, Victoria Road, Brynteg, near Wrexham, **N. Wales**; girl correspondents; age 18-21; sports, snaps; overseas, Ireland.

John Vipond, Hudson Heights, **Quebec, Canada**; sports, stamps, autographs, movies.

K. R. Phelan, 18, Nutgrove Avenue, Victoria Park, **Bristol, 3**; age 14-16; stamps.

PEN PALS COUPON

25-12-37

"In that case, I decline to discuss the matter with you!" said Trimble.

And he turned away.

But he did not go far.

Monty Lowther's hand dropped on his shoulder with a grip like iron, and he was swung back.

"Let go!" he shouted.

Monty Lowther did not let go. He tightened his grasp.

"Rats! You're coming with me!" he said.

"Where?"

"To Study No. 6."

"What for?"

"To see D'Arcy."

"Wha-what about?" stammered Trimble.

"About the money he owes you!" said Lowther grimly.

"I—I'm not going to do anything of the sort! I'm not going to dun my old pal to please you! Leggo!"

Monty Lowther did not reply, and he did not let go. He marched Trimble across the quad, with a grip like iron on his shoulder, and Tom Merry and Manners followed.

Trimble wriggled and expostulated in vain, and, still wriggling and expostulating, he was marched into Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 13.

Merely a Misunderstanding!

"B AI Jove! What's the mattah?"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the study with his chums, and he turned his eyeglass upon the Terrible Three in astonishment.

Trimble was propelled into the study in Lowther's grasp, and he wriggled away at last and dodged round the table.

"What's the little game?" demanded Blake.

"I twust, Lowthah, that you are not presumin' to wag my fwient Twimble?" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Rag him?" said Lowther cheerfully. "Not a bit of it! I am going to see justice done to Trimble."

"No such luck!" mumbled Herries. "That would be something lingering, with boiling oil in it!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Trimble is a greatly wronged person!" said Lowther solemnly. "He's rolling in money, and he's so generous with it that fellows sponge on him."

"I am aware of that, Lowthah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"My idea," pursued Lowther, "is this—that fellows who owe Trimble money should pay up! He's not going to be victimised!"

Trimble looked alarmed. He realised dimly that his foolish tongue had landed him in trouble at last.

"I—I don't want anything of the sort!" he stammered. "I don't like my private affairs discussed in this way, Lowther! It's impertinent!"

"Yaas wathah!"

"I prefer the subject to drop!" said Trimble loftily.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"But it's not going to drop just yet!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully.

"Weally, Lowthah, you can hardly persist in discussin' Twimble's pwivate affairs if he does not wish you to do so."

"My dear man, I can, and I'm going to!" said Lowther. "I've got an idea that Trimble is the biggest liar at St. Jim's, and he ought to have the credit for it! Besides, why shouldn't he have what's due to him?"

"Weally, Lowthah, you had better set the example."

Lowther jumped.

"I?"

"Yaas, you, you boundah! I have not weferred to the mattah before," said Arthur Augustus, in deep indignation, "but since you uttah such wotten wemarks about my fwiend Twimble, I shall certainly wemark that it was wotten to bowwow money of a new kid and omit to wepay it!"

"I—I say—" stammered Trimble.

Lowther's face was a study.

"Has that lying villain said that I borrowed money of him?"

"Do you deny, Lowthah, that you bowwowed a pound of him the day you met him at the station, and have not wepaid it?"

"Deny it?" gasped Lowther. "So he's been lying about me, too! Does he look the kind of chap I'd borrow money of?"

"Bai Jove!"

"So I'm down on the list of spongers, as well as this study!" roared Lowther, making a dash round the table.

Trimble dodged behind the armchair.

"Yow-ow! Keep him off!"

"Hold on!" said Blake, with a deadly look.

"What's this about this study being on the list of spongers?"

"That's what I came to tell you!" panted

FOR NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"TRIMBLE TRIES IT ON!"

A full-of-laugh long yarn in which Baggy Trimble tries on an amazing money-making scheme—and comes a cropper!

"THE GREAT FIRE AT GREYFRIARS!"

The new term opens with a big thrill for Harry Wharton & Co.—the Remove quarters catching fire and being burnt out!

Also, Professor Zarro's latest indications from the stars; stamparticle, fun column, illustrated jokes, St. Jim's Jingle, and Pen Pals.

—ORDER YOUR "GEM" EARLY.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

Lowther. "I knew he was lying, and I meant to make him own up! Do you owe Trimble pounds and pounds, D'Arcy?"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you are jokin'—"

"I'm not joking!" shouted Lowther. "He says you owe him pounds and pounds!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And that Blake, Herries, and Dig are always borrowing money of him!"

"Us!" yelled Blake, Herries, and Dig.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Trimble.

"The lying worm!" howled Blake. "Nobody's borrowed of him but Gussy, and Gussy only owes him five bob, as far as I know!"

"Blake, you uttah ass, what do you mean? Do you think I should bowwow five shillings of Twimble?"

"Is that a lie, too?" howled Blake. "Only half an hour ago he told me so, and I lent him five bob!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Well, of all the precious liars!" said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus passed his hand over his noble brow. He was almost dazed.

"Bai Jove! I do not undahstand this! Blake, isn't it twee that you owe Twimble ten shillings?"

"I," yelled Blake. "I? Oh, you ass!"

"Don't you owe him a pound, Tom Mewwy?"

"I," shrieked Tom Merry.

"Didn't you bowwow of him at the station, Lowthah?"

"You silly ass!" hooted Lowther.

"Then," said Arthur Augustus, in stately wrath, "the fellow is an uttah wascal! I gave him the pound he said he lent you—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I advanced him the money he said he had lent to Tom Mewwy and Blake—"

"Oh!"

"And now, Twimble, will you have the extweme goodness to explain?"

"I—I—I really meant to say that I hadn't lent Tom Merry a pound—"

"What?"

"And—and that I hadn't lent Blake ten shillings—"

"What?"

"And—and that Lowther hadn't borrowed a pound of me. You see, it—it was a slight misunderstanding. That's all!"

The juniors stared at Trimble open-mouthed.

Arthur Augustus broke the dazed silence.

"I have to apologise to this study for intweducin' that wevoltin' boundah here," he said. "Blake, Hewwies, Dig, I am sowwy! I shall decline to speak to him again! I wegard him as an uttah wascal! I twust he will have the decency to change into some othah study!"

"No jolly fear!" said Trimble. "Besides, what is there to quarrel about? I don't bear any malice! I'm quite willing to go on the same as before!"

Blake gasped.

"It's no good talking to him! It's action that's wanted, not words! Collar him!"

"Here, I say—leggo! Oh crumbs! Yaroooh! Help! Oh!"

Bump!

There was a resounding concussion in the Fourth Form passage. Then the study door slammed. It was Tom Merry & Co.'s farewell to Trimble the twister!

THE END.

HARRY WHARTON & CO.'S CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY ENDS ON A THRILLING NOTE—WITH A MIDNIGHT FIGHT AGAINST A GANG OF POACHERS!

The Famous Four's Christmas!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, takes a party of juniors home for the Christmas holidays. Nearing Wharton Lodge, Wun Lung, the Chinese, plays a joke on a local ruffian—Purkiss—and the latter swears to be revenged.

The juniors have a very enjoyable time at the Lodge—skating, snow-fighting, and shooting game, and Christmas passes all too quickly.

While they are skating on the lake at the Lodge, Purkiss tries to get his own back on the Chinese boy. But he is collared by the juniors, and Wun Lung, seizing the man's ankles, skates off, with the ruffian sliding on his back.

(Now read on.)

Bunter's Entertainment!

PURKISS could not help himself; he could only wriggle and writhe and gasp. Wun Lung glided on, dragging along the ruffian on his back at an increasing speed. The juniors shrieked at the absurd sight; but Purkiss did not feel like laughing. Wun Lung ran him forward on the ice for half the length of the lake, the juniors following, laughing too much to keep steady on their skates.

"Me teachee luffian lesson," murmured Wun Lung.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The lessonfulness will be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wun Lung suddenly let go the ruffian's ankles, and allowed him to shoot on, with the impetus he had gained, in the direction of the bank.

Purkiss shot away, and crashed into a mass of reeds, and lay gasping there.

He sat up and glared at the juniors, who stood in a group, looking at him and laughing. The scoundrel slowly staggered to his feet, and shook his fist at the boys, then plunged into the wood and disappeared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I think he's had a lesson."

Marjorie Hazeldene was laughing, too; she could not help it. The sight of Purkiss' punishment had been too funny. But as the juniors turned to skate along the lake, the girl's expression grew serious.

"Wun Lung is in danger," she said, in a low voice to Harry Wharton. "That attack was a savage one, and might have done him serious injury."

Wharton nodded.



"Helpee!" yelled Wun Lung. Purkiss aimed a blow at the Chinese junior, but the latter dodged the fist. Next moment Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry burst from the thickets, racing to Wun Lung's rescue.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Yes; that was what the ruffian intended. I told you of the little joke Wun Lung played on him. This is his revenge. I will report this to my uncle, and the police will look for the scoundrel. He ought to be put in prison."

And when the skating was over, and the chums returned to Wharton Lodge, Harry related to the colonel what had happened.

The old soldier's brow grew very dark.

"The hound!" he muttered. "He has always so far kept himself on the safe side of the law, but he has passed the line this time. He can be charged with assault, and he shall be. I will walk down to the village this afternoon and speak to them at the station about it."

And the colonel did not forget to do so. The police in the neighbourhood had long known Purkiss' character, and were anxious to get their hands on him, and they were not sorry of a definite charge to act upon.

But the rascal was not to be found. It was evident that he anticipated the result of his action, for he was missing from his usual haunts, and he was searched for in vain. Whether he had left the neighbourhood, or whether he was lurking there in hiding, it was impossible to say.

Colonel Wharton, on his return, impressed upon the boys to be careful in their little excursions, and to keep together, which they promised to do, though the danger did not make much impression on their minds.

During dinner that evening there was a thoughtful shade on the fat face of Billy Bunter. He was thinking deeply, but it did not prevent him from making an extensive meal. After Bunter had finished, and the juniors left the table, he gave Harry a dig in the ribs.

"I've been thinking, Wharton—"

"What with?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I've been thinking that if you fellows liked, I would give you a little ventriloquial entertainment—say, for about three hours."

"Make it three minutes," said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Ventriloquism," said Colonel Wharton, catching the word. "Is there a ventriloquist here? Let us have a sample, by all means."

"I shall be very glad, sir," said Bunter modestly. "Of course, you must not expect me to acquit myself exactly in the style of Professor Balmicrumpett, but I really think I could give you a ripping entertainment."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Harry Wharton.

"Where are you going to give the show?"

"I will stand here," said Bunter. "You can arrange the chairs in a half-circle facing me, and I will stand beside the piano first, and give an imitation of a man shut up in the piano, and expiring of suffocation."

"Good!" said the colonel.

"Very interesting," said Miss Wharton.

The juniors were grinning. There were two or three other young people at the Lodge that evening, and they took the matter seriously. Bunter was taking it seriously enough. His fat little figure looked fatter than ever in evening clothes, which seemed to be almost bursting with his plumpness. His fat face was beaming, and his very spectacles seemed to glisten with satisfaction.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I will now proceed to make my voice proceed from the grand piano."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"The proceedfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh.

There was a hush in the drawing-room. All eyes were turned on Billy Bunter. Conscious that he was the centre of interest, the fat junior assumed a more important air than ever. He cleared his throat with a preparatory cough, and began:

"Can you hear me?"

The audience waited breathlessly for the reply. Bunter's face was screwed up in the effort to produce the ventriloquial voice:

"I'm 'ere."

Unfortunately it was only too evident that it was Bunter who was speaking the reply, which did not appear to proceed from the grand piano at all.

Colonel Wharton looked surprised. He had expected ventriloquism. Miss Wharton, who had a kind heart, and was always happy so long as the others were happy, smiled sweetly and encouragingly. Some of the guests looked amazed, and the Greyfriars juniors chuckled.

Billy Bunter, all unconscious of the curious result of his effort, went on with the dialogue with the supposed person hidden in the piano.

"How did you get in there?"

"I didn't get in."

Harry looked round in amazement.

The reply came apparently from Bob Cherry, who was grinning broadly. Billy Bunter blinked round, apparently surprised himself.

"Was that you, Bob?" muttered Nugent.

"I," said Bob Cherry. "Was what me?"

"Did you speak?"

"Of course not. It was Bunt speaking."

"Oh!"

It looked as if Bunter were succeeding in throwing his voice, but that the voice was getting thrown in random directions.

"Don't you find it warm in there?" went on the ventriloquist.

"It's very warm, thank you!"

All eyes were fixed on Colonel Wharton that time. The voice certainly seemed to come from the direction of the colonel.

"Dear me!" said Miss Wharton. "We'll have the screen put before the fire."

"No, my dear—why?"

"You remarked that it was very warm."

"I did not speak."

"You—you did not speak?"

"It was the supposed person in the piano," said Bunter mildly. "It was my ventriloquial voice, ladies and gentlemen."

"Oh!" said Harry. "You'd better put a brake on your ventriloquial voice. It's taken to wandering."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shall I let you out of the piano?"

"Please do; I'm suffocating!"

It was evidently Bunter who was speaking. His ventriloquial voice was the most unreliable of ventriloquial voices.

"Do you feel bad?"

"I'm suff-suff-suffocating!" came in an expiring voice from Billy Bunter, and his face was so red and convulsed with the efforts he was making that he really looked as if he were in earnest.

Miss Wharton looked alarmed, and Wun Lung rushed to the rescue at once. A vase of flowers stood near at hand. To clutch out the flowers and dash the water into Billy Bunter's face was the work of a moment.

"Ow! Ooooh!" gasped Bunter.

The Chinese looked round proudly.
 "Me blingee to," he said. "Me savee lifee!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience simply shrieked. Bunter gasped and yelled, and Wun Lung looked so proud of his timely achievement that the juniors yelled again.

Even the colonel was rocking with laughter. The only two who did not yell were Billy Bunter and the Chinese.

"You—you beast!" gasped Bunter. "You—you've drenched me!"

"Me savee lifee. You chokcee plenty quick."

"You—you—"

Words failed Bunter. He rushed from the room to towel off the water and change his things, and there were no more ventriloquial entertainments that evening, nor during the rest of the stay at Wharton Lodge.

Wun Lung Is Mysterious!

THE little party at Wharton Lodge occupied a long room, with beds arranged in a row as in the dormitory at Greyfriars. When the juniors went to bed that night there was a curious twinkle in the almond eyes of Wun Lung which the others did not observe. The little Chinese appeared to fall asleep the soonest, but when the regular breathing of his chums told that they were asleep, he sat up in bed.

In the dimness of the room his dark eyes peered to and fro, and then he stepped quickly out of bed. He dressed himself almost without a sound, and drew on his shoes.

He crossed to the window, opened it, and let himself out on the roof of an outhouse below, closing the window behind him.

Quite unconscious of the secret departure of the Chinese junior, the Greyfriars chums slept on, undisturbed.

The dark hours of the night glided on, and still the Chinese junior was absent.

Harry Wharton suddenly started and awoke.

He had heard something, and it had awakened him; but he did not know what it was. He listened intently, and a creak came to him from the window.

His glance turned in that direction instantly.

The windows of the room opened outwards on hinges which creaked a little as they moved. Outside, a darker shadow lay on the window, and a flow of cold air told that it was slowly opening.

Harry Wharton's heart beat faster.

He knew that the window was opening under the hand of someone who had mounted upon the outhouse below. Instantly the thought of Purkiss came into his mind. The police had seen nothing of the ruffian. Was it possible that he was still lurking in the neighbourhood for revenge, and that this was the second attempt?

Harry Wharton stepped silently out of bed, touched Bob Cherry on the shoulder, and shook him lightly.

"Lemme alone!" murmured Bob drowsily. "It isn't rising-bell."

"Quiet, Bob! Wake up!"

"What is it?" asked Bob, awake now.

"Somebody's getting in at the window."

"My only hat!"

"Quick! Back me up! The others will wake when there's a row."

Harry had no time to say more, for the window had swung open, and in the darkness a scarcely visible form had climbed into the room.

Harry flung himself upon it fiercely.

Down to the floor it went, with Harry on top, and the next moment Bob Cherry piled himself on the heap.

There was a wail of anguish from the fallen intruder.

"Ow! Don't clush me!"

Harry gave an exclamation of amazement.

"Wun Lung!"

The other juniors were starting up in bed at the sound of the bump. Harry sprang to his feet and dragged up the Chinese. Wun Lung rubbed his bones ruefully.

"Wun Lung, what on earth have you been doing out of doors?" asked Harry.

"Me no savvy."

"You've been out, haven't you?"

"No savvy."

"Where have you been?"

"No savvy."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, keep it a secret if you like!" he said.

"But you came jolly near getting hurt. I took you for a burglar."

"Young ass!" said Hazeldene. "What on earth did you want to go out at this time of night for? And why couldn't you go by the door?"

"No savvy."

"Oh rats!"

And the juniors returned to sleep. Wun Lung did not sleep, however. The heavy bump on the floor had made him ache all over, and he was still awake when the knock came on the door as the signal to rise.

The juniors rose early and went down for a run on the lake before breakfast, and came in with a keen appetite for the meal. Breakfast was a cheerful meal at Wharton Lodge.

The juniors were thinking of another shooting excursion, and Wun Lung came in for a good many jokes on the subject of his previous exploits. But the little Chinese only smiled.

"Me catchee labbit," he said. "Me catchee mole labbit than Whalton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We'll see you do it after breakfast," he said.

"Unless you catch them by putting salt on their tails I don't know how you'll manage it."

But breakfast was destined to be interrupted. Word was brought to the colonel that his head keeper wished to speak to him, and he ordered the man to be shown in. Harper, the keeper, came in with a very serious face.

"Poachers again, Harper?" said the colonel.

"Yes, sir," said Harper. "Wuss than ever, sir!"

"What have they been doing?"

"We was on the look-out, sir, but we never expected them to come laying of their snares right up close to the house."

Colonel Wharton's brows darkened.

"We must look into this. Finish your breakfast, my boys. I shall have to leave you now."

And the colonel went out with the head keeper.

Wun Lung's face was a study.

"The poachers are getting more nerve every day, it seems to me," said Harry. "It would be great fun to have a hunt for them some moonlight night."

"Ripping! Let's have one!"

"What you do to poachee?" asked Wun Lung, in a tremulous voice.

"Shove him in prison," said Harry.

"What you do to man who snare labbits?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Snare rabbits. He's a poacher, of course. He goes in chokey."

Wun Lung quietly left the room.

Some of the juniors had caught the expression on his face, and they looked at one another in wonder.

"What on earth's the matter with Wun Lung?" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"He looks frightened," said Marjorie. "He must have been thinking of the poacher who attacked him yesterday."

Wharton looked thoughtful.

"It isn't like Wun Lung to be scared for nothing," he said. "I can't quite make him out this morning. I think I'll go and look for him."

And he hurried after the little Celestial. But Wun Lung had vanished.

In the Night!

COLONEL WHARTON came in presently with a grave face. Bob Cherry and Nugent had gone out with guns and a couple of ferrets to look for rabbits.

Harry, who was a little uneasy about Wun Lung, was looking for him. He discovered him at last in the gun-room. The little Chinese was sitting in the deep bay of the window, and he started as Harry entered.

"No plison," he said. "No puttee in plison."

Wharton looked puzzled.

"What on earth are you driving at, Wun Lung? What's that about prison?"

"No puttee in plison. Me no savvy."

"Why didn't you savvy?"

"Catchee labbit poachee."

"Eh? You haven't been catching rabbits, have you?" asked Harry, laughing. "How?"

"Me catchee in flap."

"Oh rats! That's not a sportsman's way of killing rabbits. But what do you mean—have you been snaring them?"

"Me catchee. No savvy poachee."

Wharton understood at last, and he burst into a roar of laughter. The little Chinese looked at him curiously.

"Why laughee?" he asked. "Me no savvy poachee."

"Ha, ha, ha! It isn't poaching if you catch rabbits, you young duffer—you're a guest here, and you can do as you like."

Wun Lung's face cleared at once.

"Me do as likee?"

"Yes, but don't use snares. Learn to use a gun," grinned Wharton. "I'll give you some shooting at a target in a safe place to start with."

"But me catchee labbit alleddy."

"You've caught rabbits already. Where are they?"

Wun Lung rose and dragged out a huge sack from a corner, and, to his amazement, Wharton saw that it was full of victims of the little Celestial's hunting. He stared at the sack.

"Why, my hat, you've got dozens there! Did you snare them?"

"Me catchee last nightee!"

A light broke upon Harry.

"My hat! So that's what you went out for?"

"Me gooe out catchee labbit. Me showee you me catchee."

"Ha, ha, ha! You must have made a night of it," Wharton laughed. "And that's what

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,553.

Harper has put down to the poachers. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry rushed off to tell the story of Wun Lung's prowess to the colonel. The little Chinese followed him rather uneasily, still a little nervous as to how the colonel would regard his unintentional poaching. But he was relieved when he found the old soldier roaring with laughter.

"My hat, what a giddy sportsman!" chuckled Hazeldene.

"Me catchee plenty labbit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me learnee shootee gun," said Wun Lung. "Me no savvy; me tinkee catchee, allee lightee. But me learn shootee gun allee same Englishman."

And during the morning Harry Wharton gave the little Chinese his first lesson in handling firearms. Wun Lung, who had plenty of intelligence, picked the thing up quickly enough; though, for the present, Harry deemed it wise to keep to blank cartridges for Wun Lung when they went shooting.

Although the extensive snaring of the night was discovered to be the work of Wun Lung, there was no doubt that the poachers had been busy in the woods. A great deal of damage had been done, which the colonel thought could be traced with sufficient certainty to Purkiss and Seth Ives and their associates.

There was war between the gang of ruffians and all landowners for a great distance around, and it was war to the knife. Colonel Wharton would never have been hard on anyone who took a rabbit for a meal, but it was a different matter with a gang of rascals who made a regular business of catching his game and selling it, instead of turning to honest work for a livelihood.

But neither the keepers nor the police could succeed in dealing satisfactorily with the "Ives gang," as they were called.

Harry Wharton was thinking over the matter, and the idea of a moonlight hunt for the poachers appealed to his adventurous nature.

The idea was hailed with enthusiasm by the other juniors. Of course, it would be necessary to keep the matter secret.

"We can get out of the window as Wun Lung did," Bob Cherry remarked. "No one would be the wiser till we came home with a heap of prisoners."

"Ripping," said Nugent. "We might come home with broken heads instead, but that's all in the game."

"The rippingfulness is terrific."

"The poachers are pretty busy now," Harry remarked. "We'll go out to-night. There will be a moon. We had better not take our guns—guns go off and cause awkward accidents in a row—but we can take a strong cudgel each, and I think we should be a match for any gang of poachers."

"Yes, rather!"

And so it was settled. The secret was kept. The capture of the poachers—if it came off—was to be a big surprise for the colonel next morning. It was a foolhardy enterprise, and the juniors were going needlessly into danger, though they did not realise it.

During the day they made some preparations in a quiet way. A set of thick cudgels were smuggled up to the bed-room in readiness, and Harry Wharton promised to wake in time for the excursion and call the others. There was a

great deal of suppressed excitement among the juniors when bed-time came.

"Are you going to stay awake all the time, Harry?" Bob Cherry asked, yawning as he laid his head on the pillow.

"Not much. I shall wake up at midnight. I can always depend on waking up if I want to."

"Good! I don't believe I shall open my eyes again till I'm shaken."

And Bob Cherry forthwith went off to sleep. The others soon followed his example, and in ten minutes there was not an open eye in the room.

Harry Wharton was right in saying that he would awake when the time came. His eyes opened, and he lay for a full minute listening, and the chimes of church bells came faintly to his ears.

Silence followed the chimes. It was broken by the sound which Harry had heard the night before—the creak of the window as it was opened from outside.

Harry Wharton started.

There was a glimmer of moonlight on the outside of the panes, and as he looked there he saw the dark shadow of a head on the glass. It was too dark in the room for him to see the beds, but he had no doubt that Wun Lung was gone out on another nocturnal excursion.

A whisper came from Hazeldene's bed.

"I say, are you awake, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear the window creak?"

"Yes; it's Wun Lung up to his tricks again."

"That's what I thought," Hazeldene chuckled softly. "I say, keep quiet. I'm going to get a jug of water ready for him."

"Good!" said Harry. "He wants a lesson for alarming us in the middle of the night like this."

Hazeldene stepped quietly out of bed and took up a jug of water. Then he crossed to the window and waited for it to swing open.

It opened the next moment. A form stepped through in the dimness. Hazeldene had the jug of water raised in the air, and at the first glimpse of the dark form he let fly.

Swish!

There was a sudden surprised yell, and then the jug fell to the floor with a crash.

"My hat! It's not Wun Lung!"

A savage voice was rasping out oaths, and it was the voice of Purkiss. Harry Wharton grasped the cudgel from beside his bed and sprang forward.

An Expedition at Midnight!

IT was Purkiss—and it was fortunate for the juniors that they were awake. There was little doubt as to the ruffian's intentions. The icy drenching he had received had utterly bewildered the man, and for some moments he hardly knew what had happened.

He had no time to recover himself. Harry Wharton was springing forward, with cudgel uplifted, and he didn't stand on ceremony.

The weapon crashed down, and though a movement saved Purkiss' head, the blow took effect on his shoulder with stunning force, and he fell to the ground. There was a shout from the alarmed juniors at once.

"What's the matter?"

"Who is it?"

"Get a light!"



"Looks like I'll have to go in and get it!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to O. Naylor, 313, Evelyn Street, Deptford, S.E.8.

But Harry had thrown himself upon the ruffian, and with a knee planted in his ribs, was pinning him to the floor.

"Help here!" he shouted. "Quick!"

"What-ho!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, rolling out of bed.

Purkiss was struggling desperately. His strength was great, and the junior had hard work to hold him. Hazeldene sprang forward to his assistance, but a blind blow from the ruffian caught him on the chest and he bumped over on the floor. Next moment Purkiss, throwing off Harry with a great effort, got to his feet.

Harry sprang at him again in a second. They closed, and the boy was hurled to the floor. Half a dozen hands were stretching out at the ruffian, when he flung himself desperately through the window. There was a crash on the sloping roof below, and then a thud in the garden beyond.

Harry Wharton looked out of the window. He could hear Purkiss gasping in the darkness, but the sounds quickly died away. The ruffian was gone.

The noise in the boys' bed-room had alarmed the house, and as Harry turned away from the window, the door opened and Colonel Wharton appeared, with a lamp in his hand.

"What is it, boys? What is the matter?"

"Burglars, sir!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Nobody hurt, sir," said Harry quickly. "It was the scoundrel Purkiss. He got in by the window, but he's escaped."

"He must have had a jolly hard bump on the ground, though," said Hazeldene.

"The scoundrel!" said the colonel. "I will call up some of the men to look for him."

A few minutes later lights were gleaming in the grounds. But the search was in vain, and Colonel Wharton came back twenty minutes later, looking disappointed.

"Is he gone, sir?"

"Yes. He won't escape us for long, though. But you may safely go to sleep, boys. I will lock the windows; and in addition I have had Fangs tied up below."

"Oh, we're not nervous, sir! Good-night!"

And the colonel retired. The juniors looked at one another dubiously.

"What price our expedition now?" murmured Bob Cherry. "With a giddy bulldog chained up under the window—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's all right; Fangs knows me," he said.

"We'll take him along with us, and he will help us find the poachers."

"By Jove, that's a good idea!"

"It's about time we started, if we're going," said Hazeldene, putting on his shoes.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

"Yes; but we must wait till the place is quiet."

The juniors dressed themselves silently. The adventure of the night had not daunted them. In fact, the possibility of finding Purkiss again, if they met the poachers, made them all the more eager.

They waited till half-past twelve boomed out, and then Harry noiselessly opened the window.

The juniors, fully dressed, and muffled up in coats and scarves, were close behind him, ready for the adventure. It was bitterly cold, but the moon was emerging from the clouds, and the light growing clearer.

"It's a ripping night for a run," said Harry.

"Yes, rather. It's my delight of a shiny night, in the season of the year—"

"Shut up, old chap! You'll alarm Fangs."

"The alarmfulness will be terrific if the esteemed Cherry sings."

Harry Wharton stepped out of the window, and his chums followed him. The junior dropped lightly to the ground, and there was a growl.

"Fangs! Old doggie! All right, boy!" whispered Harry.

The bulldog knew his young master, and the momentary ferocity died away. Harry unfastened the chain from his collar.

"Come on, you fellows—Fangs is all right."

One by one the juniors dropped from the sloping roof into the garden. Harry, with his hand on the collar of the bulldog, led the way. They quitted the garden, and in a few minutes more they were in the wood.

The juniors looked round them very alertly, fearing a poacher in every moving shadow, as the wind stirred the leafless bushes and trees.

"This way," said Harry, in a whisper. "We'll find them in the south spinney, if at all, I expect."

The juniors followed his lead. They plunged on through the dark woods, now and then emerging into an open tract where the moonlight softly fell. Nugent pressed Harry's arm.

"You're sure you know your way, Harry?"

Wharton laughed softly.

"I've roamed in these woods since I was a tot," he said. "I could find my way about them blindfold. You can rely on me."

"How do you know we shall find them in the south spinney?" Nugent asked.

"We shall find them there, if at all. You see, the wind is blowing from the north, and shots fired there won't be heard at the house."

"Oh, I see!"

"We're almost near enough to hear them now, though, if they were firing," Harry muttered. "Listen!"

The wind was blowing strongly from the north, and, of course, sounds were carried in the opposite direction. But the juniors were now close upon the spinney, and from the gloom ahead came a muffled sound.

Cr-ack! Cr-ack!

The juniors started—and stopped. It was the sound of guns, fired within a hundred yards of the spot where they stood!

The First Foe!

THE Greyfriars chums stood with fast-beating hearts, silent and still. For the first time they realised clearly the danger of the enterprise they had entered upon so lightly.

In the spinney the poachers were at work—

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,558.

armed and desperate ruffians. How many of them there were, the boys could not tell, but Harry had distinguished at least two guns.

"They're there!" muttered Bob Cherry tensely.

Wharton nodded.

"Yes. Don't make a sound, or the wind will carry it to them and alarm them."

"What's the programme?"

"We must get round to the south of them, or they'll hear us coming and bolt—or be prepared. We want to take them by surprise."

"You're right."

"Follow me, then."

Wharton led the way in a wide detour round the spinney. Wun Lung suddenly clutched his arm. The little Chinese was singularly acute of hearing.

"He heal footstep."

"Stop, you chaps."

Wharton spoke doubtfully. He had heard nothing himself. But even as the juniors halted, a man with a gun in the hollow of his arm came tramping through the thickets.

That he was a poacher it did not need a second glance to tell. He was evidently one of the gang at work in the spinney.

The next moment he saw them in the glimmering moonlight, and stopped, with a startled oath, and clutched his gun.

But Harry Wharton was already upon him, and a fierce blow from his cudgel numbed the poacher's arm, and the gun dropped from his hands.

"You young swab, I'll—"

The ruffian was dragged down, struggling and cursing furiously.

Wun Lung thoughtfully clapped a hand over his mouth, and the torrent of curses was stopped, while the juniors piled themselves on the fallen man.

"Fangs! Here, Fangs!"

The bulldog growled, and his white, sharp teeth glistened just over the face of the fallen poacher. The man started, and his struggles ceased immediately.

"Don't move, unless you want to feel his teeth in you!" said Harry Wharton grimly, and he rose from the ruffian.

The man lay quiet, but the jaws of the bulldog were close to his throat.

"Take him away!" he mumbled. "It's young Master Wharton there, ain't it? I thought so. They're at work in the spinney, Master Wharton—Seth Ives and Black George and Purkiss."

"You need tell me nothing," said Harry, with a gesture of disgust. "I'm not asking you to betray your associates."

"But I tell you, Master Wharton—"

"That's enough. We must secure this rascal somehow. Did you bring the cord, Bob?"

"Here it is."

"Good! Lend a hand and we'll have him safe in a jiffy."

"Master Wharton, I—"

"Hold your tongue!"

CHRISTMAS FUN!

Ever played "Belisha," chums? If not, you've been missing some great fun! It's a grand card game, played on the lines of "Rummy," and is simple to understand, amusing, and instructive. If you're thinking of buying someone a Christmas present, here's just the gift! It's on sale at all stationers, price 2s. 6d.

The poacher relapsed into sullen silence. His hands and feet were bound, and then an extra length of cord secured him to a tree.

"Safe enough!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Yes, till we come back for him," said Harry.

"I—I—don't leave me! By jingo, if you leave me here I'll yell, and— Ow, ow, ow!"

Bob Cherry was stuffing his handkerchief into the ruffian's mouth. It was jammed well in and tied with a length of twine so that it could not be ejected.

"I don't think you'll yell now, my pippin," said Bob Cherry pleasantly. "What do you think?"

The man only glared at him savagely; he could do nothing else. Leaving him alone, still glaring with rage, the juniors plunged into the wood and made their way cautiously to the southern side of the spinney.

A Fight to a Finish!

"WHERE'S Wun Lung?"

Harry Wharton asked the question ten minutes later, as he looked round and noted that the Chinese junior was not to be seen. There was no reply.

Harry stopped and turned back.

"Wun Lung, are you there?"

"He doesn't seem to be," said Bob Cherry, looking round. "He was following a few paces behind me. Hallo, hallo, hallo! Wun Lung!"

But the Chinese junior's voice did not reply. He was not there. An anxious look came over Harry's face.

"He must have mistaken the path," he said. "We can't shout to him loudly without betraying ourselves to the poachers."

"He won't come to any harm," said Hazeldene. "We can yell to him as we go back."

"That's so."

"Let's get at close quarters with the poachers as soon as possible," said Harry. "That will be best. We might look for Wun Lung for hours here without finding him."

"True. Let's keep on."

"The keep-onfulness is the wheezy good idea."

While the juniors were pressing forward to get to close quarters with the enemy the faint rays of the moon fell upon the yellow skin and glistening eyes of Wun Lung, scarcely a hundred yards distant. But he might as well have been a hundred miles away, for all he could see or hear of his friends.

The Chinese had missed the juniors in plunging through a trackless thicket, and he had stopped to listen for them. But they were treading too cautiously for him to hear any sound.

He had followed on in the hope of finding them, but he had gone farther and farther off the track.

He had halted now in a narrow glade, where the moonlight faintly fell, utterly at a loss. His almond eyes glistened with uneasiness as he looked round him into the dark, silent wood.

There was nothing to guide him. Round the glade were the gnarled, frosty trunks, overhead the branches, bare of foliage, threading against the sky, with the moon sailing beyond.

The little Chinese stood quiet, listening. If he could only hear a footstep or a voice to guide him—

He uttered a joyful exclamation as there was a sudden rustle in the thicket. His friends were coming back for him, then.

"Hally! Hally Whalton, here I am!" He called out the words joyfully.

The rustle in the thicket suddenly ceased. Then a voice was audible, the tones of which sent a nervous thrill through Wun Lung.

"By hokey, it's 'im!"

The next moment the footsteps changed their direction, and the burly form of Purkiss sprang out into the glade. His coppery face was furiously excited, his little beery eyes twinkling with savage satisfaction.

The ferocity of the ruffian's look held Wun Lung spellbound for a moment. Then he turned and fled. But there was a rustle in the thickets before him, and Purkiss was calling out fiercely behind:

"Stop him, George! Stop him, Seth!"

Two burly forms loomed up in the gloom, and Wun Lung, who was running right towards them, stopped in utter dismay.

The heavy hand of Seth Ives grasped his shoulder.

Purkiss came panting up. He promptly twisted his hand into Wun Lung's pigtail, and the Chinese was a helpless prisoner.

"Got him!" he said. "This is the brat who tricked me, and who dragged me over the ice on my back, with the others laughing at me. This is the brat!"

"Only jokee," pleaded Wun Lung. "Nicee jokee."

Purkiss laughed savagely.

"And now I'm going to joke with you!" he snarled.

"Hold on a minute, Purkiss," said Seth Ives. "What is the brat doing out here at this time of night?"

"I don't know or care."

"We must know, you fool! Do you think it's likely he's out here alone?" snarled Ives. "It looks to me as if there's something wrong."

"Well, ask him then," growled Purkiss.

Seth Ives grasped the Chinese boy by the shoulder and drew Wun Lung towards him, his evil eyes reading the frightened little face.

"Did you come out alone to-night?"

"No savvy."

"Can't you speak English?"

"No savvy."

"Have you any friends in the wood here?"

"No savvy."

Seth Ives shook him furiously.

"Will you answer me?"

"No savvy."

"He means that he don't understand; but he understands well enough if he chooses," said Seth Ives, with an oath. "We haven't heard or seen anything of the others. The young fool may have come out alone—perhaps for some lark."

"Are you done with him?" said Purkiss.

"What are you going to do?" asked Ives abruptly.

"I'm going to make him darned sorry he ever made a fool out of me!" he said menacingly, swinging his cudgel.

"Don't go too far, that's all," said Seth Ives uneasily. "And, look here, you can do it by yourself. I'll have no hand in it."

"Nor I," said Black George.

"I can handle him—and I'm going to smash him!"

Seth Ives and Black George, after a moment or two's hesitation, departed into the wood, leaving Purkiss alone with his victim. The ruffian, with a ferocious grin, swung the cudgel in the air.

Wun Lung dodged under his upraised arm and caught him round the body. The next moment

Purkiss went with a crash to the ground, with the little Chinese on top.

"Helpee! Helpee!"

Wun Lung shrieked out the appeal, and his voice rang with a thousand echoes through the silence of the wood.

There was a shout from the distance.

Purkiss was grinding his teeth. He struggled up, and the Chinese was unable to prevent him, but he clung desperately to his foe. And every moment his shrieks for help rang through the wood.

"You brat!" Purkiss seemed to grind the words through his teeth. "I'll make it worse for you now!"

A shout rang in the wood, closer now. The Greyfriars chums were tearing to the rescue, crashing through the undergrowth.

"Helpee!"

"You fool, can't you manage that kid alone?" hissed Seth Ives, as he returned and grasped the Chinese boy. "Hark! What's that?"

Purkiss did not reply. He aimed a blow at Wun Lung with his fist—he had dropped his weapon. But the Chinese dodged the clenched fist.

From the thickets a couple of running figures burst out, and Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry hurled themselves on the poachers.

Black George fled through the thickets, but Ives and Purkiss had no chance.

Ives let go Wun Lung, but as he did so Harry's cudgel crashed on the side of his head, and he dropped, half-stunned, to the ground.

Bob Cherry aimed a hasty blow at Purkiss, which the villain dodged, and the next second they were at close quarters.

Bob Cherry went down heavily in the grasp of the ruffian, but Wun Lung was gripping Purkiss the next moment, and between them the two juniors kept him busy. Seth Ives half-staggered to his feet, but a swinging blow from Harry's cudgel sent him crashing down again.

Nugent was on the scene by this time. There was a bump as he hurled himself upon Seth Ives and crushed him to the ground. There was a low growl as a bulldog shot past and tore away on the track of Black George.

Hurree Singh and Hazeldene came panting up, and the poachers found themselves hopelessly outnumbered.

They fought desperately, and hard blows were given and taken on both sides, but numbers told. In five minutes Seth Ives and Purkiss were prisoners, their arms secured behind their backs with their own belts.

They lay panting and cursing in the frozen grass, and the juniors were panting, too, with their exertions. From the direction Black George had taken came a terrified yell and the snarling of a dog. Bob Cherry gave a shout of delight.

"Fangs has got him!"

Harry and Nugent hurried in the direction of the snapping. The poacher had fallen on his face, and the bulldog was standing growling just behind his ears. Black George dared not move.

"Good old Fangs!" exclaimed Harry, patting the bulldog's massive head. "Collar the rascal, Frank!"

Black George was promptly secured. His arms were bound behind him, and he was dragged back to where the others had been captured. Save for a few bruises, the juniors were not hurt, and the expedition had been a success.

"You've had a narrow escape, Wun Lung," said Harry, patting the Chinese junior on the shoulder, "but all's well that ends well."

"The wellfulness of the end is terrific."

"Me allee light," murmured Wung Lung.

Seth Ives, Purkiss, and Black George, with their arms bound and the grasp of the juniors on them, were compelled to march back to the spot where the Greyfriars chums had left their first prisoner tied to the tree. He was released and tied arm-to-arm with Purkiss, and then the captured poachers were marched to the Lodge.

On the way they tried pleading, threatening, and cursing, all in vain—their captors were not to be moved. They arrived at the Lodge, and Harry Wharton knocked up Harper, the head keeper. The keeper's amazement at the sight of the poachers was great; but it was increased when Harry concisely explained to him what had happened.

"Master Harry," exclaimed the keeper, "you were taking a big risk! But I'll call some of the men to take care of these rascals, and you young lads had better go back to bed."

Now that the excitement was over, the chums were conscious of the fact that they were tired and sleepy. The keeper's advice was too good not to be taken, and a few minutes later the chums were climbing in at the window, to sleep the sleep of the just till the morning.

Colonel Wharton was amazed when he received the news in the morning. He could hardly credit it at first, but the sight of the gang of poachers in custody convinced him. He was a little angry with the boys for running such a risk without his knowledge, but his satisfaction at their success was unbounded.

It was the last adventure of that eventful holiday, but the juniors had a very enjoyable time during the remainder of the vacation, and the time to return to Greyfriars came all too soon!

(Next Wednesday: "THE GREAT FIRE AT GREYFRIARS!" Look out for this thrilling yarn telling of a big disaster at the school. Order early.)

BLUSHING Shyness, "Nerves," Self-Consciousness, etc., cured or money back! Complete Course 5/-, Details L. A. STEBBING, 28, Dean Road, London, N.W.2.

STAMPS 300 DIFFERENT, incl. Airmail, Beautiful Uncommon Sets, Pictorials, Colonials. Price 6d. (Abroad 1/-)—WHITE, ENGINE LANE, LYE, WORCS.

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS

:: PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER ::

SPORTS PACKET, 20 pictorial stamps incl. Coronations and the latest Sports issue free. Approval applicant enclosing 2d. postage. Ask for particulars of continuous free gift scheme.—C.A. Masters, Broadstone, Dorset.

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.